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# FREDERICK THE GREAT

AND

# MARIA THERESA.

VOL. I.

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# FREDERICK THE GREAT

AND

# MARIA THERESA.

## FROM HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS.

## 1740-1742.

BY

THE DUC DE BROGLIE,
MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

FROM THE FRENCH

BY

MRS. CASHEL HOEY AND MR. JOHN LILLIE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# PREFACE.

THE work now presented to my readers is composed of a series of historical studies that have appeared at intervals in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. They were received with approval in the serial form, and I hope they may find favour in their present guise, from a more numerous public.

I am aware that a portion of the interest which these narratives of a long past epoch possess, is due to the comparison that no one can have failed to draw, between the part played by France, Austria, and Prussia, the powers engaged in the war of 1740, and that which they have acted in the more tragic dramas of recent times. I think I have, however, successfully resisted the temptation to warp historic truth by seeking in the past misplaced allusions to the present. If, notwithstanding my scrupulous care, a resemblance between the events of the last,

and those of our own century be traced here and there, that similarity arises from the continuous presence of certain traits of national character, which are transmitted from generation to generation in all peoples, surviving the lapse of time and the vicissitudes of revolution.

Thus it is that, notwithstanding the social revolution which our country has undergone, to the pride of some and the grief of others, the French nation of to-day is more like that of the eighteenth century than it believes itself to be. Our ancestors were disposed, in their time, to do the very thing of which a French sovereign in ours congratulated himself upon having had to repent; they too would "go to war for an idea,—" preferring an ideal aim whose generosity and grandeur appealed to their imagination, to practical and positive results.

I think I have proved to my readers that on the death of the Emperor Charles VI., it would have been easy to have obtained from his daughter, Maria Theresa, such an accession of territory as would have strengthened the defence of our northern frontier, and probably rendered it secure for ever, by the surrender of the whole or a part of the Low Countries. To this practical, tangible, certain

advantage, France preferred the "idea" of re-establishing the German Empire according to its primitive conception; that is to say, free from Austrian preponderance and heredity.

Marshal de Belle-Isle, who was the author of that great project, and, for a brief space, its hero, was a true Frenchman in valour, vivacity, and resource. But, in order to carry out his enterprise, indeed even to render it possible, he had to begin by proclaiming the absolute disinterestedness of France, and her resolution to exact nothing for herself as the reward of her action; and Belle-Isle was still impressing this upon Frederick II., at the very moment when our ally, whose calculations were of quite another kind from ours, deserted us, to secure himself in the possession of a rich province, which he had captured by a surprise, and which is still held by Prussia. For this "idea" did France rush into a great war, of which she had ultimately to bear the whole cost, and from which, under the best of circumstances, she could have derived only an imaginary advantage. The re-establishment of the German Empire, striven for under such conditions as these, was simply a conception, under a form consonant with the spirit of the time, of that vague principle of nationality which we have

twice defended, and to which we have now fallen victims. Without straining history by an arbitrary assimilation of its facts, we may learn lessons from it which, however late, are not superfluous.

*October*, 1882.

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# FREDERICK II. AND MARIA THERESA

## (1740-1742)

## CHAPTER I.

### THE INVASION OF SILESIA.

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by the Pragmatic Sanction—Disposition and character of Cardinal Fleury—He hesitates to take a line—Prussia—Frederick takes military measures with an unknown purpose—Fleury, in order to discover his designs, gives the Marquis de Beauvau an official, and Voltaire a secret mission—Frederick's reception of Voltaire, and that of the Marquis de Valori, French Minister—Alarm at Vienna—Maria Theresa sends the Marquis de Botta to Berlin—Frederick demands from him the cession of Silesia, and prepares to invade that province—Count Gotter is sent to Vienna—His interview with the Grand Duke of Tuscany, husband of Maria Theresa—Resistance of the Grand Duke—Interview between Frederick and Valori—Frederick's proposals to France—He enters Silesia.

THE investigation of unpublished documents, recently brought to light from the long-sealed treasure-houses of State Papers, and the revelation of them to the public, has become a favourite occupation among men of letters. For several years the archives of Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Berlin have been laid open to the investigation of students of history, and have furnished them with invaluable materials. Our own French collections, our public libraries, which are better classified and better managed than they used to be, are also more available, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself, which was formerly inaccessible, has been easier of approach for the last four or five years. The number of persons who avail themselves of these novel facilities is now so considerable that it is difficult to find a place in the reading-rooms, and manuscripts are in eager demand. That it should be so

is not at all surprising. I do not know of any occupation more delightful, I may indeed say enthralling, than study of this kind. To communicate directly with the men of the past without the obligatory medium of an official historian, to find them at home, as it were, and off their guard, not in the attire and attitudes they have assumed to meet the eye of posterity in ready-made memoirs, but as they reveal themselves in documents never intended to meet the light of day, is equally instructive and amusing.

To drink at the unadulterated spring of original correspondence is thenceforth to reject most other kinds of historic testimony. All besides seems artificial and dubious; but, on the other hand, the smallest scrap of a note is of value, provided it be original and authentic. If the writer is an obscure person, there is real interest in learning from him what was thought of the events upon which we are looking back, by those before whose eyes they took place, by those who actually touched them with their hands, by that great mass of men which makes up "public opinion." The details related may be insignificant in themselves, but we shall find that in most cases they reveal some trait of manners which helps us to trace the daily course of our forefathers' lives. If, however, one is so fortunate as to come upon the autograph letters of a famous man, then the very

paper seems to turn into a living thing under one's eyes. The character of the writing reveals that of the writer, and even allows one to trace his varying moods. If his pen-strokes differ, or are hurried, one can see his hand trembling with emotion, or thrilling with anger; an erasure, with a half-effaced phrase beneath it, tells the secret of a hidden thought or a restrained feeling. How eagerly one pounces on a half-formed word, or an obscure indication, endeavouring to complete the one or discover the other, and what a triumph it is to succeed! How swiftly the time flies that is devoted to this pursuit! I am sure the most ardent lover of hunting feels no pleasure in that sport to be compared with this; they who know it not have never experienced one of the keenest of intellectual delights.

And then, when a particular search has been completed, there comes what may be called that counter-proof; an operation which consists of ascertaining to what extent the information drawn from fresh sources, adds to, subtracts from, or modifies the accepted version of the facts. Generally speaking, this process of comparison proves a disappointing one, and, to some extent, pulls down the pride of discovery. In many instances we find that the most precious acquisitions effect very slight changes in the general aspect of events, that the generally just impressions of contemporaries have

been transmitted to posterity with tolerable accuracy, and that, although truth has sometimes suffered eclipse, the mere action of time has sufficed clearly to reveal it. We become convinced, in short, that in the case of historical as in that of criminal justice, rectification is rarely necessary, and rehabilitation is seldom legitimate. It is, however, no less true that no sooner are facts put through this new crucible, than the whole history has to be reconstructed, even though it be for confirmation after revision.

Of all the histories we learn in our school days, that which will least successfully stand the test of confrontation with original documents, that which most abounds in errors requiring correction, and where truths of great importance are most ignored or misunderstood, is the history of the eighteenth century. I was led to this conclusion while searching into the nooks and corners of the diplomacy of Louis XV. In the course of my scrutiny I came across assertions which had been generally received and obediently transmitted from historian to historian, but which could no longer stand before the evidence of authentic documents. The fact, although at first it surprised me, appeared less remarkable on reflection. An explanation is to be found in the passionate controversies that sprang from the philosophic movement of the last century, in the influence exercised by that movement

over contemporary events with which it had no overt connexion, and in the striking and terrible results that ensued from it. In such a conflict of opinion impartiality was impossible, all the more because men of letters (among whom we must count the historians), being called for the first time to play a part in politics, were all personally interested in the struggle. There is not an incident of the last century, which witnessed so many and such strange events, that has not been used by the opposite parties in one sense or the other; none stood aloof from both the adverse camps, all were partisans. When all were combatants no one could be a mere spectator, and consequently a faithful narrator. I will not say with M. de Maistre, that "history in the last century was only a prolonged conspiracy against truth," but I do venture to affirm that we have not, as yet, any history of the eighteenth century, properly so styled. That which is called history is simply the product of party-spirit, always recognizable by one characteristic feature—a blind credulity that admits the most baseless suspicions when it can turn them to advantage, and contests all evidence which it finds inconvenient.

Are we sufficiently far removed from those first impressions, are we so completely under the guidance of good sense that we can at length form a correct judgment of a period from which we are divided by three generations? We are the grandchildren

of the eighteenth century; do we know better than the eye-witnesses of it, or than its direct heirs, what to think and say concerning it? It is doubtful whether we do, for passions still run high, and many questions remain unsettled. One thing is, however, plain, if we are to deal with the subject at all, we must endeavour to see as clearly, to think as fairly, to make as few mistakes, and to accept as few falsehoods as possible. The study of original documents is the best means of attaining this end, and it is with such a purpose that I have consulted the last three books—very different in character and interest—that have been issued from the offices of the Berlin and Vienna Chanceries—D'Arneth's "History of Maria Theresa," Droysen's "History of Prussian Policy," and the political correspondence of the great Frederick himself.[1]

These three books are destined to shed the light of truth on the great epoch that fills the central space of the eighteenth century, and is occupied by the equally prolonged and similarly illustrious reigns of Frederick II. and Maria Theresa. No epoch is more worthy of profound study. Few more striking spectacles have ever been offered to the mind's eye

[1] D'Arneth, *Histoire de Marie-Thérèse*, 10 vols., Vienna, 1863—1879. H. G. Droysen, *Histoire de la Politique Prussienne*, 5th part. *Frédéric le Grand*, Leipzig, 1874—1881. *Correspondance Politique de Frédéric le Grand*, 7 vols., Berlin, 1878—1881.

than the simultaneous appearance on the stage of history of the free-thinking prince and the pious woman who ascended their respective thrones on the same day, and followed each other almost as closely to the grave, after they had occupied the world for forty years by a political, military, diplomatic, philosophic, and religious rivalry, which they bequeathed to their descendants, and which has survived all the vicissitudes of the French Revolution, and is not yet extinct, even in the present generation. By an incomprehensible decree of Providence, the destinies of those two royal natures, so richly, but so differently gifted, were closely bound together, and entangled from first to last, so that all the acts of the one reacted upon those of the other. In the battle-field as well as in diplomatic conferences; whether they are disputing the possession of Silesia or the partition of Poland, Frederick and Maria Theresa are always to be seen confronting each other.

Here is material ready made for one of those academic parallels after the fashion of Plutarch, in which our classical literature took delight in bygone days.

Neither Droysen the Prussian, nor D'Arneth the Austrian, indulges in the puerilities of comparison and antithesis, but each has his favourite hero and his patriotic predilections. Droysen, we find, has received confidential communications intended to

glorify the memory of Maria Theresa's enemy, while M. d'Arneth allows his tender, loyal, almost filial respect to appear in every page of the work which is a monument to the illustrious ancestress of his sovereign, the Emperor of Austria. The influence of dynastic and national jealousy is to be traced in the narratives of both the Prussian and the Austrian; there are many points of divergence in their respective versions of the same facts, and several different or contradictory assertions. Both are conscientious writers, who have gone direct to the source, and who do their work with proofs in hand, and quotations noted. They are equally and absolutely trustworthy with respect to documents; the records are full and correct; that the advocates plead in opposite interests is only a useful element in the formation of a judgment on the facts and their issues.

The evidence that is, above all, veracious and irrefutable—in short, priceless—is that of Frederick himself, and we have recently been given access to this. It consists of seven volumes of political correspondence, perfectly intact, and comprises his most private cabinet notes. In this correspondence we have the whole Frederick, no longer the Frederick who has depicted himself in his "Histoire de mon Temps" with apparent frankness not devoid of art—no longer the transfigured Frederick who was adulated in Paris by hired

flatterers, selected by himself from the highest ranks of literature and philosophy, but a Frederick without mask or make-up, who issues his commands to his servants with cynical freedom that proves his sincerity. This Frederick is to be believed, even, nay especially, when himself is his theme; for the harshest of his censors would have held himself guilty of calumny had he said of the King of Prussia what Frederick says. Unfortunately these invaluable revelations do not go beyond the first four years of his reign; but from these beginnings we can judge the man, and prejudge the sequel.

I regard those first years, in which the great prince entered upon his career, as especially interesting to us. The dawn of the reign of Frederick II. is also the birth-time of that power which is now attaining to its full and colossal development under our eyes and at our expense. There is no Frenchman but must feel a painful curiosity to know what it was in its cradle. Again, were not the early misfortunes and trials of Maria Theresa only the opening scenes of that great drama of which Sadowa was the close and Sedan the epilogue? The stage is the same, the personages directly engaged, or who interpose in the action, are the same; they are, as they were only yesterday, Prussia and Austria: France also, for, at both epochs in the strife of her neighbours, France was directly and immediately

concerned beyond the Rhine. Our diplomatists were negotiating at Berlin, in 1740, on the eve of the invasion of Silesia, just as they were negotiating at Berlin in 1866, on the eve of the invasion of Bohemia, and in 1740 our troops followed closely upon our diplomatists, even as they did fifteen years ago. To narrate the first passages of arms in the deadly duel between Frederick and Maria Theresa, is then, whether we mean it or not, to write a chapter of the history of France, and indeed of contemporary history.

It was this relation between past events and recent occurrences, by which the present generation is still so deeply moved, that led me to make these studies. Later events have thrown a lurid retrospective light upon the former relations of Austria, France, and Prussia. Believing that many French readers besides myself would be struck with this, I thought a brief summary of the fresh information now placed within reach by the Chanceries of Vienna and Berlin would be interesting, especially as I proposed to check and supplement those foreign documents by others to be taken from our own archives. To interpose France as a third interlocutor, represented by political or military agents, between Austria and Prussia—both loudly accusing each other or making confession, but also differing much and often in their respective narratives or estimates of the

same incidents—would be a curious study, and one with a useful bearing upon contemporary events. I have been permitted by the various ministries to examine the reports of the French agents whose position during that critical epoch makes their testimony especially trustworthy and valuable. Observe that I say the French agents, not the French historians. The latter, on the contrary, have merely repeated, with stupid servility, everything that was dictated by Frederick, so that neither advantage nor instruction is to be gained from them. But the government of Louis XV., having been by turns the ally and the enemy, now of Prussia, and again of Austria, and having carried into each of its successive alliances a great deal of indecision, reserve, and distrust, its representatives, ministers or ambassadors, were in a position to know everything, while their minds were free to form independent judgments of men and things without passion or prejudice. They habitually avail themselves of this, with the frankness, vivacity, and good sense that were characteristic of the intercourse of good society under the old *régime*. If their despatches did not add anything to our knowledge of events, they would still be lively and pleasant reading; so that I hope to find favour for the necessary extracts from those documents. From general history, which may be read everywhere, and with which every one is familiar, I shall borrow

only what is indispensable to enable my readers to follow the course of events.

## I.

On New Year's Day, 1740, two great German sovereigns, the Emperor Charles VI. and Frederick William, King of Prussia, were near their death. Their thrones were soon to devolve upon their respective heirs, under very different conditions.

The long reign of Charles VI., which had been brilliant in its earlier years, was closing in humiliation and misfortune. Since his accession to the throne, the Emperor had witnessed the final dissolution of that powerful agglomeration of States whose union under the hand of a great man, had, for a while, threatened Europe with the return of universal monarchy. Spain, with her great dependencies beyond the seas, had detached herself for ever from the vast inheritance of Charles V.; with Naples and Sicily the whole southern portion of the Italian peninsula was also lost. In the north of Italy the Austrian crown still retained extensive possessions on the two banks of the Po; Milan and Tuscany and the duchies of Parma and Piacenza were still hers; but even there her rule was menaced, either by the pretensions of the princes of the new Spanish dynasty, or by the growing ambition of the dukes of Savoy, who were masters of Piedmont, and had just assumed the title of Kings of Sardinia. The honour

of the imperial arms had not been enhanced by an unfortunate campaign against France, recently fought in those very plains of Lombardy; nor had they been more happily employed at the other end of Europe, on the banks of the Danube, where the Turks had just wrested Wallachia, Servia, and all the conquests of Prince Eugene from the Empire, by the Treaty of Belgrade. These unfortunate campaigns had exhausted the finances of the Empire, and disorganized its administration.

It was not, however, upon these things that the dying prince chiefly brooded. His sleepless nights were haunted, and his malady was aggravated by other cares. It grieved him sorely that with his fading life the integrity of the royal inheritance which he had received from his ancestors must end. His race was dying out with him, for he had no male heir. Would his daughter, a princess of twenty-three years old, have the right or the power to assume the whole? Nothing was more disputable than her right to do so, nothing less likely than her power. In former days the house of Austria had been complimented upon the acquisition of its wide domains, not by force of arms, but by the more pacific method of princely alliances and conjugal unions;

"Bella gerant alii: tu, felix Austria, nube:"

but the consequence of these extensions of territory, in the shape of family acquisitions, not that of

conquest, and according to the rules of civil law, was that almost all the provinces united under the sceptre of the Hapsburgs, had come into its possession by marriage contracts, laden with charges of every kind, and testamentary dispositions that almost exhausted the varieties and complications of Germanic jurisprudence in matters of inheritance. The extinction of the male line opened the way to litigious claims of all kinds on behalf of "agnate and cognate" kin of every degree. In vain had Charles VI. tried to anticipate those contending claims by regulating the succession by an edict to which he gave the name of "Pragmatic Sanction," reserved for the most solemn legislative acts of the Empire; in vain had he obtained the guarantee of the principal powers of Europe for this edict at the cost of heavy sacrifices: he had no great faith in his own efforts, and events proved that he was not wrong. In his mind's eye the dying Emperor beheld the princes of his kin and his neighbourhood hurrying, on the day after his death, to claim a fragment of his Empire, each of them armed with a black letter title-deed. Would a woman's hand be strong enough to collect and bind together the loosened fasces of so many different States, and what was to become of the Imperial Crown, which, by virtue of a tenfold election, had become almost hereditary in the House of Austria, when there would no longer be a man's head to wear it?

The young monarchy at Berlin, though less rich in traditions, and less powerful in appearance, had no apprehensions of this kind. Its rapid extension, especially since the Reformation, was due to prudent negotiations and daring feats of arms, and although its various acquisitions, spread over the Germanic continent, were wanting in homogeneity —for their scattered position and their extent and their dispersion rendered a line of defence difficult —not one of them was contested, nor was there any reason to fear disputes in the future. The ancient patrimony of the House of Brandenburg, enlarged by the addition of Pomerania, Prussia and Lower Lusatia, formed a compact nucleus, in which thriving populations, devoted to their sovereign, were governed by a strong and active administration. And then, by a special favour which Providence no longer extends to any but new dynasties, the throne had been occupied successively by three sovereigns, who were endowed with qualities, not indeed equal, but all of a nature to ensure the increase of either the solidity or the brilliancy of their recently acquired greatness. Frederick William, called the Grand Elector, had military and diplomatic talents of the highest order; he was equally qualified to treat with Richelieu and Louis XIV., and to fight between Turenne and Condé. He had skilfully made use of the long struggle between the Houses of Bourbon and Austria, to secure his own independence, now by

helping to diminish the imperial power, and again, on the contrary, by coming to its aid after he had weakened it. His successors, who were very inferior to him in all these respects, were, nevertheless, as well served by their defects as he had been by his genius. His son, Frederick I., King of Prussia, was merely vain, but he centred all his vanity in the acquisition of the royal dignity, which placed him above all others among the innumerable sovereigns of the Germanic body.

The succeeding monarch, whose reign was now drawing to a close, was a brutal and sanguinary despot, a domestic tyrant more dreaded by his own children than by his subjects; who had passed his life in amassing money which he did not expend, and in drilling the ranks and measuring the stature of soldiers whom he never risked on any field of battle. But the result was that he was about to leave the two great motive-powers of all policy, a well-filled treasury and an army in good condition, to his successor.

Wide as the dissimilarity between the two royal inheritances was, the contrast between the two royal personages on whom they were to devolve was still more striking, and neither one nor the other bore any resemblance to ordinary heirs-presumptive, brought up near a throne with the prospect of ascending it.

The Archduchess Maria Theresa, the daughter of

Charles VI. and the object of his deep and solicitous affection, the last fragile scion of a race of redoubtable rulers and mailed knights, was an amiable princess, endowed with all the graces, and animated by all the gentle and affectionate feelings which render a young woman of whatever rank dear to her kindred, and an ornament to society. Her face, as D'Arneth describes it for us, had even more charm in it than beauty; her dark blue eyes were full of life and sweetness. She wore her fair hair, which was very abundant, in its natural curls; her complexion was extremely fine, the form of her face a perfect oval, and although the under-lip protruded slightly (which is hereditary in the House of Austria), this peculiarity did not injure the effect of a winning smile that revealed teeth of dazzling whiteness. She carried her head with stately grace, the long neck rising from the sloping shoulders with peculiar elegance. The frank, sweet expression of her countenance was an index to her pure and candid mind.

The Archduchess had been carefully educated, although not in any respect beyond the standard of the cultivated ladies of the court. She particularly excelled in accomplishments, and sang with such artistic perfection and sentiment that her teacher, a distinguished Italian composer, said she would only have to appear once in the leading theatre at Vienna, to make her fortune. This talent was

especially appreciated in a city which has always been remarkable for musical taste and proficiency. It does not appear that equal pains were bestowed upon the cultivation of her literary acquirements, if we may judge of them by the very bad spelling to be found in her letters, written by turns in Germanized French and Frenchified German. She spoke several languages fluently, and knew as much Latin as was necessary for a future Queen of Hungary, who must not be ignorant of the official tongue of her subjects. She was a fervent Christian and a devoted daughter, and cared only for simple pleasures and home-life. The Empress Elizabeth, her mother, who liked stir and excitement, complained that though she had been taught to shoot pretty well at a target, the Archduchess could never be made to like "sport" in any shape. In a word, she was formed to please in every way, rather than to shine. Her sweet presence cheered the somewhat gloomy court, in which she bloomed like a delicate flower in the crevices of some old building.[2]

Only those who approached the Archduchess very nearly, and especially persons who had occasion to converse with her concerning her rights and her future interests, had been enabled to discern that the germs of more masculine qualities, perhaps even passions, were concealed under this surface of feminine

[2] D'Arneth, *Histoire de Marie-Thérèse*, vol. i. pp. 10, 13, 86, 355, 356.

grace. Whenever she was led to speak either of the ills under which the Empire laboured, or of the part which she would one day have to play in it, both her voice and her countenance became animated, and her language displayed clearness of intelligence and firmness of purpose worthy of the future that awaited her. The young girl then spoke in a way which astonished old politicians; she knew what she wanted, and she defined it. She did not depute to any one the conduct of that delicate negotiation whose object was the selection of a husband for her. Any aspirant to the hand of the heiress of Austria became, in virtue of that pretension, a candidate for election to the imperial crown, and there was no lack of competitors. The preference to be given to one among them involved a highly important decision, in which not only Austria but the whole of Germany was interested, and on this point, reasons of state rather than sentiment, were entitled to be heard. Nevertheless, Maria Theresa from the first unhesitatingly avowed her attachment to her cousin, Prince Francis, the heir to the duchy of Lorraine, and this attachment was sanctioned by the Emperor, her father. His Majesty's approbation was not shared either by the diplomatists or by the politicians of the Aulic Council. The prince had the drawback of being, like the people whose sovereign he was to be, more French than German, and, by a singular coincidence, this rendered his possible eleva-

tion to imperial rank equally unwelcome to France and Germany. Beyond the Rhine the prince was thought to have too little Germanic blood to wear the crown of Charlemagne; while it was intolerable to Versailles that a province like Lorraine, fitting into the boundaries of France and holding the key of our frontiers, should be annexed by so close a tie to the Empire. So strong was the resistance he had to encounter that the Duke of Lorraine was ultimately obliged, very reluctantly, to cede patrimonial territory in which his family was greatly beloved, to France, and to receive the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, in which he was to exercise only a nominal and temporary rule, in exchange.

The Archduchess Maria Theresa presided in person over this transaction, and displayed as much warmth in justifying and defending her choice, as she exhibited sagacity in comprehending, and firmness in overcoming the diplomatic difficulties by which it was opposed. The English minister, Sir Thomas Robinson, an experienced diplomatist (who liked the marriage as little as any of the others, but was forced, like them, to yield), freely expressed his astonishment in his confidential despatches. In Coxe's "History of the House of Austria," we find the minister's comments upon the spirited conduct of the young princess, her elevated mind, her strong reasoning powers, and her devotion to her father, "whose misfortunes touch her as if they were her

own;" and upon her eminent fitness for sovereignty. But he also remarks upon the alternation of "that lofty humour" with the tenderest affection for the Duke of Lorraine. "When she sleeps, it is to dream of him; when she wakes, it is to talk of him to her lady in waiting. We may be sure that she will never renounce either the government or the husband that she believes to be made for her, any more than she would forgive him who should deprive her of them."

The marriage took place, and the Grand Duchess assumed towards the husband who was not her equal either in rank or intelligence, the attitude of a most devoted, submissive, and almost humble wife. "Let me hear from you," she wrote to Francis, during a short absence, "far from you, I am only a *pauvre chienne*."[3] We might censure D'Arneth for revealing this childish utterance of conjugal fondness, even after the lapse of a century, only that he does so to illustrate the peculiar and striking features of that noble life, in which all the domestic virtues were united in their simplest, even homeliest expression, with a truly royal loftiness of thought and action.

At Berlin, it was not upon a "feeble girl" that the hopes of the reigning dynasty rested; but upon four princes in the prime of life, and all trained

[3] We cannot translate this very familiar phrase, but the reader will not fail to remember that its application is not opprobrious in German or in French.

to the profession of arms. Providence had blessed the union of the powerful Houses of Prussia and England with a numerous progeny; but never was the gift of heaven less gratefully acknowledged. The old King's furious temper, the haughty and capricious humour of the Queen, turned their home-life into a hell upon earth. The young princes, and even their sisters as well, being alternately terrified by violence and worn out by physical privation, lived in a state of abject dread of their parents, which blunted and repressed their faculties; and—a novel application of the right of primogeniture—his heir, Prince Frederick, who seemed to have been richly endowed by nature, was selected by this singular father for the worst treatment.

The young man, driven to despair by the excess of his suffering and humiliation, had attempted to fly, but he was discovered, seized, shut up in a State Prison like a common criminal, and forced to be present at the execution of the friend whose only offence was having connived at his attempted escape. At length he seemed to be cowed by this tyranny; he entreated pardon, confessing faults which he had not committed, and professing repentance which he did not feel. Thenceforth he lived in a state of submission to the paternal will that went quite beyond the bounds of filial respect. He had been known, while sedulously avoiding the very slightest meddling with affairs of State, to conciliate the ministers who

had helped to persecute him, and to treat them as intimate friends. He was satisfied to live in the small castle of Rheinsberg (he changed its name to Remusberg, as being more classical), and never left it, except to take an intelligent but not zealous share in the military manœuvres. At Rheinsberg, he devoted himself to speculative pursuits that could not offend his father, however much he might despise them. He studied poetry, music, literature, all sorts of things, trying his own hand at each in turn, and kept up regular correspondence with all the savants, artists, and men of letters in Europe. His youthful admiration was more passionate than discriminating; it included the pious Rollin, the Lutheran Beausobre, the metaphysical Wolff, and although he gave the palm to the illustrious Voltaire, he bestowed praise and affection without making much distinction between the really fine works of that great writer and the inferior ones. We find him placing "La Henriade" on a level with Homer.

A select little society formed itself around the prince at Remusberg, and there led a pleasant enough life, sportive and studious at the same time; uniting the worship of the Muses with decorous pleasures. The company was composed of persons whose rank and quality could not give umbrage to the most suspicious of governments; they were unpretending savants and officers of the lower

grades. Every subject was discussed, after the fashion of Aristotle and of Plato, even politics of the abstract and ideal kind—the best possible form and conditions of government. The only forbidden topic was the policy of the day, and especially that of the morrow.

"On my honour," writes the prince to Baron Grumkow, "I can assure you that I live as if the king were immortal, and may I die this moment if I have formed any plan to be carried out after his death."[4] In short, study, and study alone, seemed to absorb all the energy of an intellect whose first flights had been repressed by a despotic hand, and denied any other outlet.

Was this eager search after truth and art the real expression of a sincere feeling, or was it a mere recreation and mask for repressed ambition? Did the prince seek no other conquest than that of science, and was he preparing himself for no other than dialectic encounters? That point was discussed around him in many different fashions, and opinions were divided on it. Men of letters, whose self-love makes them readily credulous, were delighted to have so noble a fellow-labourer, and could not sufficiently praise the new Marcus Aurelius, in whose person philosophy was to be enthroned. The

[4] *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, published in 1850, vol. xvi. p. 95. *Correspondance Générale* (Letter to Baron Grumkow, 1732).

most celebrated and least credulous of these men of letters—I allude to Voltaire—was carried away with this notion like the others. Twenty years later indeed, when he was disenchanted by experience, Voltaire speaks of the early days of this royal friendship in a careless way that would lead us to believe that he had been from the first proof against its allurements. "The hereditary prince," he says, in his Memoirs, "employed his leisure in writing to French men of letters who were tolerably well known in the world. The principal burden fell upon me.. There were letters in verse, treatises on metaphysics, on history, and on politics. He addressed me as a demi-god, I called him Solomon; epithets cost us nothing. Some of this rubbish has been printed in the collected edition of my works."

But Voltaire is boasting: there is nothing in his voluminous correspondence at that period to indicate either that he found his relations with a future sovereign so onerous, or that he cared so little for the interchange of compliments and flatteries that they implied. Far from treating the poetic and moral effusions which were sent to him under the seal of the prince as rubbish (*fadaises*), if he did not admire them unreservedly, he revised them with perfect seriousness. He did not even make an exception of a refutation—since become famous—of the doctrines of Machiavelli, which he undertook to have printed, and in which a less partial reader would have at

once discerned a mere schoolboy's theme, altogether wanting in personal conviction. There is every reason to believe that Voltaire was profoundly convinced that a prince who regarded him as a demi-god must be the hope of the human race.

But those who, being less lavishly flattered, kept their heads cooler, did not feel so very sure upon this point; certain indications led them to recognize in the tyro-poet, or metaphysician, a not too fervent disciple of pure morality and truth. They noted, with some misgiving, the usually sarcastic and sceptical tone in which he conversed on every subject, his disparaging and disdainful remarks about everybody, and at times a harshness of look and manner which was unpleasantly like his father's. In short, everybody felt that when the prince who was so unlike other people should come to the throne, a surprise would be in store for the world; but no one could say which was to be disappointed, philosophy which built hopes upon him, or politicians who distrusted him. This question was most frequently asked among foreign courts and cabinets, and the answer was awaited with the greatest curiosity. In the complication of interests which were then stirring in Europe, with the well-remembered conflict of influences, whose recurrence was foreseen, it was important to know which side would be taken, in the day of battle, by a youthful sovereign who would then be in

uncontrolled possession of 70,000 men, and as many millions; so that all the foreign ministers were competing for access to him, each armed with the kind of argument to which he was supposed to be most accessible. He had been married against his will, and he lived apart from the Princess Royal, not choosing to avail himself of any of his conjugal rights. England offered him the hand of one of the princesses, through the Queen, his mother (a sister of King George II.), in case he should think of divorcing his wife. Austria, who knew him better, attacked him upon a softer side. The ambassador of Charles VI. had formerly saved his life, by shielding him from his father's anger when he wanted to bring him to trial, on the plea that a prince of a royal house could be brought to justice only by the Emperor. Then after he was pardoned, and when the sordid economy of the old king often left him in actual want of necessaries, the same envoy came to his assistance with the offer of a pension from the imperial funds; and the proposal was accepted with eagerness neither royal nor philosophic. This method of currying favour having apparently succeeded, Russia tried her hand at it, but in a less direct way. The advances were not supposed to be made by the Empress Anne herself, but by her prime minister Biren, and they passed through the hands of the Saxon minister at St. Petersburg, a worthy nobleman, who had gained the prince's

confidence while teaching metaphysics during his residence at Berlin. The remittances were made, in a roundabout way, being previously announced in cipher, under the form of parcels of books on history and philosophy. France had either not sought, or failed to find any equivalent means of currying favour. One of her envoys, La Chétardie, a man of taste, and a very agreeable companion, gained occasional admission to the inner circle of Schloss Rheinsberg; not so his successor, the Marquis de Valori, an old soldier whose real merit was hidden under a rough exterior, and the awkwardness arising from his extreme obesity. Frederick, who, in later times appreciated him more justly, took a dislike to the marquis, and amused himself by turning him into ridicule. When the poor diplomatist asked for an audience of the prince "in order to speak with him on affairs," he received the curt reply, "the commissions with which you are charged can relate only to the person of the king, and I do not think it fitting that I should be informed of them." Upon this the crestfallen envoy gave to his minister an account of his failure, in terms which depict pretty clearly both his own ignorance and the general uncertainty.

"The Prince Royal," he writes, "sets an example of rigid self-restraint, even in the smallest matters. In all but its dissimulation his character

resembles that of his father; those who know him best are well aware that they will have to make his acquaintance anew; he will be no longer the same man, but they know not what he will be."

A state of anxious expectation was general, from one end of Germany and almost from one end of Europe to the other; the natural result of the strange freak of fortune, which staked the destinies of two great kingdoms on two such uncertain things as a woman's strength of mind, and a philosopher's sincerity.

The philosopher was the first to be brought to the test by destiny, which summoned him to reign. On the 31st of May, 1740, the aged Frederick William expired after a long illness, and his son left his retreat to succeed him. If the Prince Royal had thought of nothing until that day, the new King was ready for everything by the next morning. Either he had deeply studied every detail of finance, administration, the army, and diplomacy, or the whole was revealed to him at a glance. He had not reigned twenty-four hours when every one about him, whether old counsellors or new favourites, knew, without any possibility of mistake, that the former were not to rely upon their past political services, nor the latter upon their literary intimacy, but that they had to serve a master who meant to employ them, one and all, in fixed designs, of which he would keep the secret. This revelation, which gave

rise to more than one disappointment, has been compared by Macaulay to Shakspere's famous scene in which Henry V. dismisses the former boon companions of the Prince of Wales. This comparison is not, however, exact: Voltaire was not like Falstaff, the guests of the Rheinsberg were not ribald revellers, and Frederick dismissed no one. On the contrary, the striking feature of his conduct in taking possession of power was, that, while he adhered to almost all the traditions, and especially to all the results of his father's policy, correcting only whatever was violent or eccentric in them, he instantly set the seal of his own originality upon them.

He retained all the ministers in their several posts. Not only did he not disband a single soldier, but he increased the effective force of his troops by caring more for the valour and number of his men than for their stature. Some of his friends, who had expected to receive gifts of money, had to learn by experience that if Frederick knew better than his father how to spend money, he could reckon as closely, and would keep as tight a hold upon the keys of the Treasury. At the same time there was nothing to indicate that he intended either to relinquish or to suspend any of his former occupations. Either because he foresaw, with the instinct of genius, the new part which literature and philosophy were about to play in the world, or because, like every man who is destined to act upon his contemporaries, he

shared their passions and their inclinations, he took care not to alienate those nascent powers from him even for a day, but was, on the contrary, anxious to bind them more closely to his service, and even to induce them to follow him to the battle-field. He did not do this for the sake of finding relaxation in them; he regarded them merely as the instruments of his designs. "I have begun," he writes to Voltaire, "first by increasing the effective troops by six battalions, six squadrons of hussars, and one squadron of body-guards. I have laid the foundation of our new academy."[5] In an army and an academy placed upon the same footing on the same day to subserve the same policy, we get an exact view of Frederick.

Such as he appeared upon the stage to the spectators of his own time, he now appears to us who are taken behind the scenes by the recent publications. The untried prince at twenty-eight reveals himself from the first day exactly and in all points the same man as the aged monarch, full of years, fame, and experience, employing the same variety of arts to forward the same unity of views. It is because they so clearly present Frederick to us in this light that the new revelations are curious, and give vital interest to details which might hitherto have seemed insignificant.

[5] Frederick to Voltaire, *Correspondance Générale*, June 27, 1740.

The Political Correspondence opens with the instructions given to the envoys who were sent to the various Courts to announce Frederick's accession. We know that these formal missions usually consist of an interchange of compliments merely, but this case was different. Every one of these documents bears the impress of an individual genius, or as we might say, of the lion's paw. Those addressed to the Cabinets of Versailles and London are especially remarkable. The critical situation of both these Courts at that time gives a special importance to all transactions connected with them. After thirty-five years' peace, France and England, in spite of their governments, and carried away by irresistible popular passions, were about to resume their ancient rivalry. The English minister, Walpole, had declared war upon Spain unwillingly and under parliamentary pressure, and the French minister, Cardinal Fleury, had probably been still more reluctantly dragged into the quarrel on account of the close connexion between the two thrones occupied by the House of Bourbon.

It is curious to observe the quickness with which Frederick takes in the situation, and assumes an intermediary place between the adverse parties, which enables him to set a price upon his friendship; in plain terms to offer it to the highest bidder. All his life long he will play this part of military and political jobber in the quarrels of European

States, trading upon his genius and his army as a merchant trades upon his capital; with this difference, that trade bargains, once concluded, are binding, while Frederick, on the contrary, will never hesitate to break his bargains, even after signature, when anything more advantageous is proposed to him.

The very selection of his envoys seems to have been matter of calculation. While he caused himself to be represented in London, or rather at Hanover, where King George then was, by Count Truchsess, a diplomatist of long standing and a noble of ancient family, he merely sent an officer, Colonel de Camas, the son of a refugee from the Edict of Nantes, but who was one of his early friends and a member of his intimate circle, to carry his compliments to Louis XV. It caused some surprise that so small a personage should be accredited to so great a king, and that a Protestant émigré should be sent back to his own country which was now governed by a Cardinal. To some who expressed this sentiment, Frederick replied jestingly that Camas had but one arm, while Valori, the French envoy, had lost three fingers. "The King of France," said he, "sends me a one-handed, I pay my debts by sending him a one-armed ambassador."

The truth was this: Truchsess was directed to make it known in London that Camas' being sent to the King of France—precisely because it was a strange thing to do—was an indication of a confidential

mission which England should hasten to anticipate if she wanted to avert its ill-effects; while, at Versailles, Camas was to insinuate that, knowing the king well and long, he had discovered his ambitious designs, and that they must be seconded as quickly as possible if France would not have him against her.

"You will give the King of England"—such were the instructions to Truchsess—"the strongest assurances of my personal friendship; and before French ministers or creatures (*sic*) you will affect great cordiality even should very little exist . . . but you will lay especial stress upon the sending of Camas, and you will say *with an air of jealousy* that he possesses my confidence, and that it is not for nothing he has gone to France."

Here, on the other hand, are the instructions to Camas:—

"The augmentation of our troops which will take place while you are at Versailles, will furnish you with an opportunity for speaking of my quick, impetuous way of thinking; you can say it is to be feared this augmentation may set all Europe in a blaze; that the young are naturally enterprising, and that notions of heroism had disturbed and might again disturb the well-being of many peoples. You may say that I am naturally well-inclined towards France,

[6] "*Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen*, l. i. p. 8. ("*Il ne va pas en France pour enfiler des perles.*")

but that if I am neglected just now it will be once and for ever; whereas, if I am secured, I should be in a position to render more important services to the monarchy than Gustavus Adolphus ever rendered. With the Cardinal you must be all amiability; you will repay civil speeches with civil speeches, and realities with other realities. Above all excite, as much as possible, their envy of England."[7]

Besides his official mission with its secret instructions, Camas had another task to accomplish on his way, and this too was no bead-stringing business. Half-way between Berlin and Paris he had to turn aside and pay a visit to Voltaire, who was at that time staying at Brussels with his celebrated friend, Madame du Châtelet, in order to watch the progress of a law-suit in a Flemish court, in which the Marquise was interested. The pretext of this delay was to stop the publication of the "Anti-Machiavel," which Voltaire had entrusted to a publisher at the Hague. I say the pretext, for the publisher having absolutely refused to give up a manuscript rendered doubly valuable by the newly-acquired dignity of its author, Frederick did not insist upon it, and seemed by no means displeased that his lucubrations should see the light. The real purpose of Camas' visit, which was made with considerable ostentation, was to show to the whole of Europe that the crowned poet paid his homage to

[7] "Polit. Corr." vol. i. p. 8.

literary royalty before any other. Camas allowed this to be so clearly understood, and Voltaire accepted it so readily, that, a few days afterwards, Frederick wrote to him without any fear of appearing to jest: "Camas' letters are full of nothing but Brussels. One would think he had been sent to Voltaire instead of to Louis."

To these compliments a present of a cask of Hungarian wine was added, and Voltaire says in his Memoirs, that he considered the "liquid gift," as he calls it, fell very far short of the royal largess he expected to receive. No doubt he would have preferred something more solid, but, although he thought the wine only middling, he swallowed the flattery with great avidity.

Voltaire was informed that after Camas he might expect to see Frederick himself. The same letter apprised him that the young king would be on the banks of the Rhine by the end of summer, and invited him to a meeting at Cleves. The motive of this journey was quite intelligible, for the duchy of Cleves, although detached from the other Prussian States, was part of the patrimony of the House of Brandenberg. The kings of Prussia also laid claim to the reversion of the duchies of Berg and Juliers at the death of the Elector Palatine, an aged and childless man. It was therefore natural that Frederick should come and receive the homage of his Rhenish provinces, and at the same time look after

his future rights. But in addition to this ostensible object, which was a real one, the idea of approaching nearer to France, which was still the greatest political, intellectual, and military centre in Europe, had much to do with a resolution, which, although quite explicable, appeared to every one a little hasty.

When the king's departure became known at Berlin, a rumour was spread that he intended to push on to Paris. It is certain that finding himself almost within sight of France, he could not resist the temptation of seeing a French town and a French army, and he entered Strasburg incognito. This incident, which made a great stir at the time, had consequences which it was impossible to foresee; they were, as we shall presently see, much more serious than has hitherto been supposed.

In those days, Europe was not furrowed by railways, and princes of all ranks did not travel about as they do now, without any state, and without exciting either curiosity or attention. Frederick's freak was a strange one for that time, and it would have been extremely difficult to keep it secret; but the truth was, he did not take any pains about the matter. The suite he selected to accompany him, composed of his brother Prince William, two aides-de-camp, two chamberlains, and eight servants, was numerous for a simple Silesian gentleman, whose passport bore the obscure name of

Count Dufour. And this passport was only filled up at the last moment, because it was asked for by the officer in command at Kehl, and stamped with a seal bearing the royal arms, which the king wore, a circumstance that did not escape the notice of those who were present.

The entry of the party into the town and their putting-up at the Raven hotel (or tavern, as it was then called), caused a sensation, especially as the singular personage who took the lead demanded the very best of everything, and sent to the military café close by, to invite several French officers to sup with him. This request on the part of a stranger was sufficiently cool, and the innkeeper who carried the invitation, was laughed at by the officers who were at table in the café. Two of them, however, captains in a Piedmontese regiment, who had probably taken more wine than was good for them, ventured to accept the invitation, no doubt with the intention of amusing themselves at the expense of German cookery and German pedantry.

To their great surprise they found in their mysterious host a distinguished-looking young gentleman, easy and pleasant in manner, who spoke French without any foreign accent, was witty and quick in repartee, drank their health in excellent wine, and took his part in their rollicking songs. Towards the end of supper, however, the supposed count indulged in some jests about the appearance

of the French troops, which were sharply taken up by one of the guests, and a quarrel was imminent, when the other, who had suspected something, and kept his temper, succeeded in silencing his companion, and put an end to the conversation. The two officers retired at a late hour, having requested the noble strangers to do them the honour of supping with them on the following evening, and took care to report the occurrence the next morning to the governor of the province, an old soldier of some distinction, who had been a commander-in-chief, and also the head of a great embassy. This governor was the second Marshal de Broglie, a circumstance to which I owe the advantage of possessing a narrative of this little affair at first-hand, written on the spot, and more correct than the stories that appeared in the gazettes, and are to be found in the Memoirs of the time. The Marshal, concluding that a stranger who did things on so grand a scale must be either a prince or an adventurer, recommended the young men to be on their guard, while he set the police on the track of the foreigners.

He confesses that for a moment he thought of having the individual in question arrested, but just then Frederick, feeling sure that he should not be able to pass undiscovered, sent his brother and two of his companions with his compliments, and excuses for not coming in person as he

was suffering from an indisposition that prevented his leaving the house. The Marshal received his visitors politely, but examined them with great attention, and invited them to dinner, proposing, however, that as it was a festival day they should first hear Mass in his private chapel. This proposal seemed more embarrassing than it ought to have been to nobles of a province like Silesia, of which the greater part is Catholic. After some hesitation, only one consented to accompany the marshal to Divine Service. This one had an Italian accent; he was in fact Algarotti, a young Venetian scholar whom Frederick had lately created count and made one of his chamberlains. Algarotti only seemed unconcerned, and kept the ball of conversation rolling; the others were greatly embarrassed, seeming (says the Marshal in his narrative) to have very little of the ease of society about them.

While Mass was being said and dinner served, Frederick, who was tired of staying at the inn, had ascended to the platform of the cathedral clock-tower to amuse himself, and as he came down was accosted by a citizen, who, calling him *Sire* and *Your Majesty*, besought him to set his nephew at liberty. This nephew was a big fellow of five feet eight, who had been seized while travelling in Germany, and forcibly enlisted in the Grenadier Guard of the late King William on account of his stature. Frederick endeavoured to pass on, telling the man that he was

mad, but the latter pulled out of his pocket a medal which had been distributed at Berlin on the coronation-day, and showed the King his own effigy. Frederick then put his hand over the man's mouth, and promised him anything he wanted provided he would hold his tongue. The other promised at once, but naturally made the best of his way to the governor's cabinet to tell his story, and there found two soldiers, deserters from the Prussian army, who had been placed on the watch near the Raven, and who corroborated his statement.

The Marshal, having found out the truth before the departure of his guests, took one of them aside, and begged him to tell Count Dufour that he had been recognized, and that every honour due to his rank should be paid him if he so pleased, but that his secret should be kept if he preferred that course.

In answer to this the King sent word to the Marshal that he was coming, and requested that he might be received in private.

Of what nature was their interview? Was Frederick—annoyed at having been discovered, and a little confused at having exposed himself to the mischance—out of humour, and was the Marshal embarrassed? Did the Marshal receive him with such a display of respect and attention as must have betrayed him to the servants? Had he put on all his orders and his full dress suit for the occasion? Did he show so little tact as to talk politics, and to

remind the king that when he was ambassador to the English Court he had met the late king of Prussia at the Hague, and even signed a diplomatic convention with him? Or did he lead the conversation to military affairs, and tell of the feats he had performed in Italy, in a campaign in which Prussia had taken the part of Austria? All this it is impossible to know, seeing that the only witnesses of the interview were two of Frederick's aides-de-camp.

At all events, the King went away in a short time, in a worse humour than when he arrived, after bestowing a very cold salute on the Maréchale (who had insisted on being presented to him), and promising ungraciously to return to supper and afterwards go to the theatre.

At his request, an officer was sent to accompany him to the citadel. Meantime the news had spread abroad, and a crowd gathered round the hotel door, and followed the King to the ramparts. He examined everything, the guns, the arsenal, and the fortifications, asked for precise information on every point, and on returning to his inn ordered post-horses, wrote a scarcely civil note of excuse to the marshal, and started off in the twilight with even less ceremony than he had used in coming.

The disappointment of the Marshal and that of the public were the greater that a raised seat and dais

had been prepared for the royal visitor in the state box, and the theatre was filled to overflowing long before the hour fixed for the performance.[8]

When he arrived at Wesel, Frederick wrote Voltaire a burlesque description of his expedition, half in prose and half in verse, after the fashion of the "Voyage," by Chapelle and Bachaumont. In this production he ridiculed every one, laughing a little at himself, a great deal at the stiffness and

[8] In my account of this incident I have adhered to the Marshal's narrative, written on the following day. If the old governor was guilty of any indiscretion he was either unconscious of it, or very naturally unwilling to acknowledge it, so that we cannot discover what it was that ruffled the king's temper so much that when the Marshal had to act in concert with him in some military operations during the following year, the recollection of this incident formed a serious difficulty.

It is, however, certain that things were not as they are represented by Frederick's followers, amongst others by Thiébaut in his *Vingt ans de Séjour à Berlin* (vol. i. p. 151). According to Thiébaut it was during a dinner to which Frederick was invited by the Marshal that he was recognized, and the Maréchale, who was not aware of what had happened, said something which offended Frederick about the Queen, his mother, whom she had known in her youth at Hanover. Besides this, towards the conclusion of dinner the marshal inadvertently used the word "Sire," and thus betrayed the incognito.

Even had this been so, the cause of Frederick's irritation would seem very inadequate; but the whole story is inaccurate; Frederick did not dine with Marshal de Broglie, and the Maréchale saw him only for a moment.

The *Archives de la Bastille* (vol. vii., published that year) contain a letter from the Marshal to the Minister of War, giving an account of the royal visit which tallies exactly with the details of the narrative in my possession.

stateliness of the Marshal, and still more at France and the French.

"There," he says, "I saw those Frenchmen whose renown you have so often sung."

> "Ce peuple fou, brutal et galant,
> Superbe en sa fortune, en ses malheurs rampant,
> D'un bavardage impitoyable
> Pour cacher le creux d'un esprit ignorant.
> * * * *
> Léger, indiscret, imprudent.
> Non, des vils Français, vous n'êtes pas du nombre;
> Vous pensez, ils ne pensent pas."

Voltaire, on receiving this masterpiece, found no fault except with the verse, which was certainly halting. The insults heaped upon his compatriots he took in good part, seeming to be unaware that by doing so he endorsed them. Frederick divined, even before he knew Voltaire, that in his own case, as in that of the sect of his disciples and the crowd of his imitators, it would always be easy to get the better of national pride, by flattering literary vanity. He made use of this characteristic on more than one occasion.

The long-desired interview between the king and the poet took place towards the end of September at the Château de Meuse,[9] near Cleves; it was affectionate, even demonstrative, on both sides. Frederick, who was confined to bed with fever and ague,

[9] Called Schloss Moyland by Mr. Carlyle.

got up to do honour to his renowned guest. They supped together, and discussed until a late hour, says Voltaire, all sorts of subjects, "the immortality of the soul, free-will, and even the Androgynoi of Plato," if not thoroughly, as Voltaire asserts, at least with plenty of spirit, and sparkling wit.

The King took this opportunity of asking Voltaire to do him a service by drawing up a manifesto, addressed to the Bishop of Liége, from whom he demanded a million (crowns) in exchange for a manor, or village in his diocese, called Herstal, over which the crown of Brandenburg claimed suzerainty.

The dispute had been pending for some years, before the Germanic Diet. Frederick had now resolved to exact his due without more parley, and had already sent forward a body of troops to support his claim. The Emperor Charles VI. vainly protested against this high-handed proceeding which dispensed with the imperial decree.

But it was precisely because the Emperor claimed the right of doing justice that Frederick resolved to take it on himself. He was determined to show that on this, as on every other point, he would be beholden to no one. Voltaire's manifesto, which has been lately discovered, and forms part of his complete works, reveals this intention, but it is not expressed in so plain and indeed

barefaced a way as in the following autograph note in the Political Correspondence:—"I will go into Cleves and try fair means. If I am refused, I shall know how to do myself justice. The Emperor is the phantom of an old idol which was formerly powerful and strong, but which is now a mere nonentity. He was a strong man, but the Frenchman and the Turk have given him . . . and he is done for."

The Bishop, convinced either by Voltaire's arguments or by the Prussian grenadiers, gave in, and paid the money.

But these high-handed proceedings, this unmannerly mode of action, both diplomatic and military, began to alarm European politicians. "The declaration" (that which Voltaire had drawn up), writes the Marquis de Valori, "is regarded here as a first effect of that presumption of which I have told you, and of unwillingness to accept the counsels of wise men who know how to make princes speak with moderation and firmness."[1]

Every one was asking to what did Frederick's presumptuous bearing, and ill-restrained ambition tend? The succession to the Duchies of Juliers and Berg, which was the only claim put forward by Frederick, was too small a thing to justify such great preparations and such arrogant language.

[1] Valori to Amelot, 20th September, 1740 (*Correspondance de Prusse*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Fortune was about to enable Frederick to give a singularly prompt and categorical answer to the general question. The Emperor Charles VI. died, almost suddenly, at Vienna, on the 26th of October, and when the courier who brought the intelligence arrived at Rheinsberg, Frederick was suffering from an unusually acute attack of intermittent fever. The officers of his household hesitated about disturbing the king; one of them, did, however, take the despatch to his bedside, and delivered it without adding a word. The King read it through without betraying a particle of emotion; then he rose, although still shaking with ague, and sent for Podewils, his Prime Minister, and for Marshal Schwerin.

While waiting for them, he wrote to Voltaire,—"My dear Voltaire, this time a most unexpected event prevents me from opening my mind to you. The Emperor is dead. . . . This death upsets my peaceful projects, and I believe that in the month of June it will be a question of gunpowder, soldiers, and trenches, rather than of actresses, ballets, and theatres. . . . A total change in the whole political system is taking place; this is the stone which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, that fell upon the statue of gold and silver, iron and clay, and destroyed it. . . . I must get rid of my fever, for I want my machine, and must get as much out of it at present as possible. . . . Adieu, my dear Voltaire,

never forget me. . . . I send you an ode in reply to that of Gresset." [2]

Frederick was right; the stone which had detached itself from that ancient rock, the Empire, was about to burst into fragments over all Europe.[3]

Death, even when it has been long expected, comes as a surprise at last. Notwithstanding the very perceptible change in the Emperor's health —one marked symptom was the deep melancholy to which he had been subject for several years— no one anticipated his being carried off so rapidly. A cold, caught while hunting, followed by an attack of indigestion from eating mushrooms, reduced him in two days to so hopeless a state, that he had barely time to give his blessing to his children and commend his soul to God.

Not the slightest preparation had been made for an event which should have been foreseen by every one. Charles VI. had, indeed, left his entire possessions to his eldest daughter by a will which all the Powers had accepted. But, in addition to the fact that some of the consenting parties had attached menacing reservations to their act of adhesion, we know how little respect the living usually pay to their engagements towards the dead. One thing alone could have

[2] Frederick to Voltaire, 26th October, 1740 (*Correspondance Générale*).

[3] See Appendix A., for General Opinion of Frederick II. before his accession and during the first months of his reign.

rendered these posthumous arrangements effective; this was the elevation of Maria Theresa's husband, the son-in-law of Charles VI., to the dignity of King of Rome, by an election which would have made him the pre-designated head of the Holy Empire, and the successor of Charlemagne.

This had really been the desire of the deceased Emperor, and he had privately spoken of it repeatedly to some of the Prince-Electors, but had put off any public proposal from day to day, hoping that the Grand Duke would, either by a lengthened sojourn in Germany, or by rendering some distinguished service, succeed in making people forget that he was a foreigner. He was anxious, too, before making an attempt of the kind, that the Archduchess should have given birth to a male heir, thus averting all fear of another female succession. None of these hopes were realized. The Archduchess had borne two daughters, and the young Grand Duke, frivolous, narrow-minded, and haughty, had by no means succeeded in winning popular favour; indeed, in the last war against the Turks, in which he had commanded a body of troops, he had evinced no special merit, but shared the unpopularity of all the generals concerned in that disastrous campaign.

The most vexatious part of the matter was that a marked dislike to the Grand Duke existed, especially in the hereditary States of the House

of Austria, in the very centre of his own patrimony.[1] Vienna, which had been for centuries the capital of the Empire, was little inclined to put her own important position in jeopardy by too great loyalty to the doubtful rights of a young woman of whom but little was known, married to a foreigner who had shown himself to small advantage. If there was one among the numerous aspirants to the throne of Charles VI. who would be likely to obtain the imperial crown more easily than the husband of Maria Theresa, why should not that one be frankly accepted, and contests, or suits whose issue could only be doubtful be thus avoided? The Elector Charles of Bavaria, who, like Francis of Lorraine, had married an Archduchess (the daughter of Joseph I.), and was not only much more German, but also the possessor of an extensive State which he would bring with him as a gift to his new subjects, was pointed out as a very acceptable sovereign. Popular feeling pronounced in his favour, even in the streets of the capital. "The Princess is not liked," wrote the French ambassador, the Marquis de Mirepoix; "part of the enmity and aversion felt for the Grand Duke falls upon her. The Elector of Bavaria has the good wishes of every one, and I believe that if he were to come forward, the whole nation would be at his feet."[1] "The murmur of

[1] The Marquis de Mirepoix to M. Amelot, October 22nd, 1740 (*Correspondance de Vienne*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

tumultuous voices," writes the Venetian ambassador, "says that the kingdom should not be ruled by a woman, and that public interest requires that a German prince should be chosen." [5] Trouble and doubt were predominant also in official regions, and all would have been lost had Maria Theresa hesitated for one moment. But she never doubted for an instant either her right or herself. Although some months advanced in pregnancy, and so much overcome by grief that she was obliged to be carried from the chamber of death, where she fainted several times, the fatal event was no sooner over than she rallied, so to speak, at the call of Providence. That very day the great Officials of the State were informed that she awaited their homage, and she received them seated beneath the royal canopy. In a voice which, although broken by grief, was yet strong, she confirmed them in their several posts, requiring only that they should be as faithful to her as they had been to her father; she then commanded that thenceforth every official document should be drawn up in the name of the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, Archduchess of Austria.

The next morning she summoned the Privy Council, and took her seat at its head, having the Grand Duke on her left. A strange sight it must have been, this woman in all the pride of youth and beauty, surrounded by white-headed, broken-down

[5] D'Arneth, vol. i. p. 170.

ministers, the youngest of whom was, according to D'Arneth, not less than sixty. And it must not be supposed that these were old servants, full of respect and devotion to their masters, hastening in tears to the feet of their new sovereign; they were, on the contrary, men whose feelings were deadened by a selfish use of prosperity, accustomed to court intrigues, and ready to turn with the wheel of fortune. Neither from a corrupt diplomatist like Zinzendorf, nor from a scribbler like Bartenstein, famous only for his trickiness, could the slightest vestige of chivalrous feeling be expected, and more than one as he entered the Council-Chamber was thinking of a safe way out of it.

The Queen contrived, however, by her combined graciousness and authority, first to subdue, then to enchant, and finally to arouse them. The orders she gave and the measures she prescribed for the recognition of her authority, were executed that same day with an activity to which the ancient imperial machine had long been a stranger, and which seemed to make its rusty springs creak. The energy of the Queen was contagious, it communicated itself to every one. Neither she nor the Grand Duke rested for a moment, and they seemed neither to eat nor sleep; they were inseparable in the accomplishment of their mutual task, for this was the one point upon which Maria Theresa would listen to no advice. Accessible to every one, ready to listen to

what all had to say, there was one subject concerning which she was immovable: this was her determination to share everything, rights, duties, and dignities, with her husband. She would neither permit him to be set aside, nor suffer any to hold aloof from him. Nowhere, but especially in public, was she seen without him. "The ministers," said the Marquis de Mirepoix, "have made the strongest representations to the Queen about her determination to have the Grand Duke with her at public banquets, but she has silenced them by saying that such is her will."

By dint of working with her husband, and making him act and speak, she seemed to communicate some of her own charm of manner to him. People said he had never been so amiable as since his recent elevation. We know how rapid are the changes in popular opinion; in a few days it became the fashion to laud the royal couple to the skies, and the new reign was everywhere accepted with acclamation. No remonstrance was made even when, a short time afterwards, the Queen, by a solemn act, associated her husband with herself in the government by elevating him to the dignity of co-regent; this did not, however, confer upon him either any personal right, or any title to the succession.

But this change in public feeling did not prevent the Elector of Bavaria from drawing up a protest in

due form against the Queen's coronation, and causing it to be handed to all the ambassadors by his minister before he left Vienna. He did not ground this protest upon the claims of his wife; these he had formally renounced, but upon those of his ancestress, the daughter of Ferdinand I., and niece of Charles V. One protest being made, no matter whether the reason for it was good or bad, others would be sure to follow. Accordingly, the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland, in the name of his wife, the niece of Charles VI., and the eldest of the surviving archduchesses; the King of Spain, and the Duke of Savoy, both descended from the wives of Philip II. who represented the elder branch of the House of Austria, all asserted their pretensions. Although each of these crowned litigants put in his claim to the whole of the inheritance at issue, it was quite possible they might find it to their interest to agree to divide it. In that case it would be coalition to-day and dismemberment to-morrow. And what forces had Maria Theresa at her disposal wherewith to make head against such a threatening prospect? An empty treasury and an army so completely disbanded that in some places there were but two or three men in a company, and these commanded by generals, some of whom were in disgrace, and others in prison, because they had not defended the honour of their flag. What a fruitful source of encouragement for the ambition that was

rife, it was, that there was only a woman who had neither troops nor money to contend with!

There was, however, an element more alarming than threats from without and poverty within. A darker cloud hung over two points of the horizon, Versailles and Berlin. From these two centres of action, although so unequal in importance, either safety or ruin might come. It is true, neither France nor Prussia had a direct interest in the inheritance of Charles VI., but the influence of either might turn the scale. Nothing could be done in Germany without the small but efficient Prussian army; in Europe, no formidable coalition could be organized without the assistance of France. What part would be taken by Prussia and her young sovereign? by France and her old minister?

If the word of kings was as much to be relied on as that of ordinary mortals, and if the faith of treaties was binding upon governments, there could not be the smallest doubt as to the intentions of France. At the conclusion of the war of 1735, the King of France had given, not merely his consent, but his express guarantee to the Pragmatic Sanction, in terms so strong as apparently to have exhausted every binding phrase in the diplomatic vocabulary, and to have provided for every eventuality that could possibly be imagined. After having quoted the dispositions made by Charles VI., in favour of

his descendants, the treaty of 1738 went on to say,—

"It being demonstrated that public tranquillity cannot long subsist, nor the balance of power in Europe be preserved [6] in any other way than by the maintenance of this order of succession, his Most Christian Majesty, moved by the ardent desire of securing both public peace and the balance of power, and also *in consideration of the conditions of peace to which his Imperial Majesty has consented principally for that reason*, binds himself in the strongest manner to defend this order of succession, and in order that no future doubt may arise about the effect of this pledge and guarantee, his Most Christian Majesty consents to put in execution this same pledge, commonly called a guarantee, whenever it may be necessary, promising for himself and his heirs and successors, in the most faithful and absolute manner, to defend with all his power, and to maintain and preserve against any person whomsoever (*contra quoscumque*), so often as it shall be necessary, this order of succession which his Imperial Majesty has declared, in the form of a perpetual and indivisible trust, in favour of the first-born, for all the heirs of his Imperial Majesty, whether male or

[6] The preliminaries of peace which preceded this treaty were signed in 1735; the treaty itself, which only reproduced and annotated them, was not concluded until 1738.

female. Therefore, his Most Christian Majesty promises and binds himself to defend him or her who, according to the agreement above quoted, may succeed to the kingdoms, provinces, and states which his Imperial Majesty now possesses, and to maintain him or her in perpetuity against whomsoever may attempt, in any way, to disturb the possession of them."

Thus, all was provided for, and nothing was forgotten; no heir is excluded, no portion of territory excepted from a guarantee so unlimited. It would seem impossible to add anything to this; yet there was something more obligatory even than the text of the convention; it is what the treaty calls *the conditions of peace to which his Imperial Majesty had consented principally for that reason;* in other words it was the cession of Lorraine, agreed to at the same time by the son-in-law of Charles VI., in favour of the father-in-law of Louis XV., with reversion to the crown of France at his death. By this acquisition of a long-coveted province, France obtained full payment for the promised assistance, and put, so to speak, the price of it in her pocket. The bargain was complete, and although not concluded in express terms, it was on that account all the more binding in honour and conscience. After such a pledge offered and accepted, how could the word of a king and a gentleman be doubted? At any rate, Charles VI., if he had any mistrust, was very careful not to show

it. From that moment, his relations with his former adversary became not merely pacific, but friendly and almost affectionate. He gratefully accepted the mediation of the French ambassador at Constantinople to put an end to his quarrel with the Turks, and the mutual friendship was carried so far, that at his death it was seriously reported in Vienna that he had named Louis XV. as his testamentary executor.

In fact, if it was the interest, and should have been the inclination, of any one to secure the fulfilment of obligations so sacred, it was surely those of the more than octogenarian minister, to whom the weak Louis XV. left the guidance of his policy. The treaty of 1738 was the personal act of Cardinal Fleury, a glorious achievement, and one to which he should have held all the more firmly because it had given him a European reputation for singular talent and wisdom. It was the crowning act of his protracted administration, and posterity, which has formed but a low estimate of this senile politician, finds it difficult to realize the amount of authority over his contemporaries that the continued favours of fortune had secured to him.

The world had beheld, with surprise which eventually turned to admiration, an old priest, with neither birth nor talent to recommend him, quietly come forth from a sacristy, rise to the summit of power at an age when others are quitting it, main-

tain himself steadily in his position for twenty years, and, when over eighty years of age, enter upon a great war and conclude it with honour, after triumphs which had gratified the national pride, by securing to his country the possession of a long-desired province. The factitious and precarious part of these advantages, the part which chance played in the matter, escaped the notice of spectators (especially at a distance). Except at Versailles, no one was aware that Fleury had made war unwillingly and in fear and trembling, being forced to do so by continuous pressure, and that he was most desirous of getting out of it at any moment and at any price. Still less was it known that these brilliant campaigns had done more to exhaust France than to exalt her fame, and that they had dealt a heavy blow to her internal prosperity, which had scarcely recovered from the misfortunes of Louis XIV. and the disorders of the Regency. Fleury alone, perhaps, was in the secret of these ills, and as he did not share the prevalent illusion, was always afraid of its passing away. It was because he had drawn an unlooked-for prize in the lottery of battles, owing to the caprice of fortune, that he had no wish to try again. His tardily acquired reputation seemed to him, like his strangely prolonged old age, a flickering flame kept alive by a breath, and ready at any moment to expire. To make his power hold out during his life, and end both together peacefully

at as remote a period as possible, enjoying meanwhile the homage rendered to the Nestor of politicians on all sides; to receive flattering letters from every European sovereign, and listen to them with eyes cast down, in that attitude of meekness which a well-bred prelate assumes at the altar when the incense rises around him; to answer them in a tone of humility, and thus fill up his days without losing his rest or exhausting his strength, were henceforward the only aims of his ambition, which age had weakened, but had not destroyed. In this frame of mind it was sufficient for him to be threatened with a naval war with England; he had no desire to add the risk of setting the continent in a blaze by breaking a treaty which he had himself made; therefore he was particularly careful to keep up an interchange of epistolary amenities with the Emperor to the last.

"Your Majesty," he writes, on the 26th of February, 1740, "may rest assured that the King will observe the engagements he has entered into with the most exact and inviolable fidelity, and if I may speak of myself after the mention of a name so august, I venture to hope that my peaceful intentions are well enough known to preclude any idea of a desire on my part to kindle a flame in Europe. Your Majesty honours me exceedingly by the good opinion in which I am apparently held, and I shall certainly endeavour, during my whole life, never to

prove unworthy of such flattering sentiments. My deep gratitude, the interests of religion, and those of peace urge me to this course quite as strongly as the profound respect with which I am, &c." [7]

It might be thought that the simple way of testifying to his devotedness and sincerity, would have been to address Maria Theresa, in acknowledging the news of her accession, by the double title which attested her right to the royal succession. By such a course her claims would have been acknowledged without discussion, the Pragmatic Sanction maintained, and all Europe would probably have acquiesced in silence. But we see in this instance, how rarely a man who has grown old in obscurity, rises to the level of his fortune.

Fleury had been so long accustomed to obey, that as an all-powerful Prime Minister he could adopt neither the habit nor the tone of authority. The "royal domesticity" (as it was the custom to call it), in which he had passed three-fourths of his life, had set a mark of timidity upon him, which made him prefer roundabout, underhand proceedings at all times. It is a well-known device with inferiors, whether stewards, clerks, or valets, who have succeeded in getting the better of their masters, to pretend to obey, while in reality they command; to appear to submit to the yoke which they in

[7] Fleury to the Emperor, the 26th of January, 1740 (*Correspondance de Vienne*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

truth impose. Fleury had reached the highest rank by the constant practice of this artifice; he had been promoted to each dignity in succession without seeking any, and while always seeming to avoid them; he had guided the royal will in secret, long before he became its public exponent, and he still preferred to act surreptitiously and behind a mask, even when appearance had been added to reality, and he had not only the right to exercise his power openly, but it was his duty to bear all its responsibility.

To play a manly part before the world, to show his face boldly, to challenge criticism, to assume all the burthen of the consequences of the future in the face of the King and the Court, was an effort beyond his strength. When he should have acted, he hesitated, and instead of approaching the desired object directly, he took a roundabout path, paltered with obstacles, and dallied with opposition, always hoping to guide the course of events unseen, so as to bring about a "superior necessity" which should oblige him to do the very thing he desired, and force malevolence to acquiesce in silence.

A man who knew him well affirms, in authentic Memoirs, that these paltry tactics, which Fleury had already employed in the preceding war, had succeeded admirably. He had contrived so effectually to persuade all Europe that he was driven, contrary

to his inclination, to have recourse to military operations, that England and the other maritime Powers were led by this consideration to abstain from taking part in the quarrel.[8] It was no doubt, the recollection of this that encouraged Fleury once more to resort to the same tactics for an object still dearer to him—the preservation of peace.

He could not be ignorant that the treaty of 1738 was censured in more than one quarter, notwithstanding the advantages it procured for France. Politicians were heard to say that, by guaranteeing the feminine succession of the house of Austria, an opportunity of profiting by its weakness to crush that constant enemy of France was lost. Neither Richelieu nor Mazarin would, they said, have let slip a similar chance. Then the Elector of Bavaria had already been bewailing the neglect he experienced, calling to mind the services rendered and the sufferings endured by his father, that faithful ally of Louis XIV., and the promises which had been made to him that all this should be remembered on occasion. The time had now arrived; Fleury foresaw that all these grievances would be pressed with still greater urgency, and instead of forestalling them

[8] The words used by Marshal de Belle-Isle in his "Mémoires" are, "The war declared against the Emperor by the King . . . is a stroke of Cardinal Fleury's, worthy of the most distinguished politician, for he had the wit to make Europe believe that strong necessity obliged him to take up arms, and by this means he kept back all the maritime powers."

by a bold decision, he tried to get the better of them by patience, and cajolery all round.

To Prince Lichtenstein, Maria Theresa's ambassador, who came in great haste to question him, he replied that the King of France was determined to keep his engagements, and that to cast a doubt upon that matter was to insult him. But he added that the accession of a woman, and of an Austrian sovereign not invested with the imperial dignity, being an event which had not taken place for centuries, he was not certain about the protocol to be employed in answering him, and the point of etiquette must be inquired into.

When the next day the Bavarian minister submitted his protest, he told him, privately, that though the Pragmatic Sanction was binding on France in so far as the general succession to Charles VI. was concerned, it made no stipulation with regard to the imperial crown, and the Elector remained free to aspire to it, as also did the King to second his claims. He added, even more privately, that all the guarantees in the world could avail nothing against the rights of a third party; that he had often warned Charles VI. to this effect; and that, if the Elector could establish his claims by arguments which were not to be refuted, he would see what could be done.[9] Then, having by this means, if

[9] See Appendix B.: the nature of the reservations placed by France upon the guarantee secured to the Pragmatic Sanction by the treaty of 1738.

not satisfied, at least silenced all objections, he, in his turn, rested on his oars, and watched the course of events.

I know not why this mode of acting is called gaining time, since it generally results in the loss of it. In any case, though a waiting game may suit a man of ninety, a man of twenty-eight will rarely have patience to play it. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that Berlin was far from imitating this prudently equivocal attitude, that, on the contrary, everything there denoted warlike activity, whose effect was soon visible, although its object continued to be unknown. "The King," writes Valori on the 1st of November, "works from eight to ten hours a day with Podewils and Schwerin; they dine together, and see no one." This secret occupation continued without intermission for the best part of a month, and the first result was an order for the mobilization of all the troops, with directions to the officers to have their camp equipages in readiness; then came the establishment of batteries of artillery and depôts of ammunition in the principal frontier-towns. The organization of the army upon a war-footing was confided, with some solemnity, to the Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, who was acknowledged to be the best of the Prussian generals, but who had been previously out of favour. He had not emerged from retirement since the beginning of the new reign.

We may imagine the excitement caused by these measures, which it would have been impossible, even had it been desirable, to conceal. In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, they immediately became the subject of conversation among Cabinet Ministers and village newsmongers. All minds were at work, and every kind of supposition was in circulation from the most modest to the most ambitious. According to some, Frederick aspired to nothing less than the Imperial Crown, and many a Protestant already smiled at the picture of the Holy Empire in the hands of a heretic. According to others, nothing more than the taking possession of the disputed duchy, to save it from being involved in the probably impending conflict, was in question. Other versions of the story were that Frederick had already contracted a formal engagement with either the Grand Duke or the Bavarian Elector, to support the claims of one or other according as he should be properly appreciated and his services repaid—in what coin was not stated. At one moment the troops were said to be marching on Mecklenburg, at another their destination was stated to be Silesia, the banks of the Rhine, or Nuremberg.

The language of the Prussian envoys to the different Courts, was confused, contradictory, and changing with the place and the audience; it gave colour to every rumour. From the diplomatists who

resided at Berlin, nothing at all was to be gathered; Valori was denied admittance to Rheinsberg, and General Manteuffel—a brave Saxon and a personal friend of Frederick's, but who was known to have relations with the Court of Dresden—having pushed his investigations rather too far, was politely requested to quit Berlin.[1]

Fleury, inattentive at first, woke up before long. Desirous as he was to smooth down matters, and to let things slide softly and slowly, this clash of arms disturbed him sorely. In the first place he tried to sound Count Camas as to the meaning of it all. Camas came to take leave of him after he had accomplished his special mission, and Fleury, to get him into conversation, let him perceive, without laying too much stress on the matter, that should the claim of the Elector of Bavaria to the Roman Empire be supported in Germany, France would make no difficulty about its recognition. The reserve of Camas was, it seems, extremely disconcerting, for when he had taken leave, Fleury could not refrain from saying very sharply, "It is easy to see that man is a refugee: we have no worse enemies."

He then made up his mind to send two confidential envoys as scouts. The first on whom his choice naturally fell was the Marquis de Beauvau, who had

[1] Valori to Amelot, November 5, "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 87 and 95.

been sent by Louis XV. to congratulate the young King on his accession, and the second was no other than Voltaire himself, who had been invited to come to Berlin in the preceding summer, and was now preparing to go thither, to the despair of the loving and learned Émilie. In reality, the great writer offered his services, and this proceeding was the more remarkable, because after being for a long time in favour with Fleury there was just then a misunderstanding between them. It was, as we all know, the fate of Voltaire, during his long life, to be by turns petted and feared by Louis XV. and all his ministers; at one and the same time a Gentleman of the King's Chamber at Versailles and an exile at Ferney, now flattering and anon defying the great ones of the day. He was always tempted back to the ministerial antechambers after a time of disgrace or a fit of sulks, by his taste for such confidential missions as might procure him interviews with sovereigns. At this moment he was out of favour with Fleury, because, having promised to write a pamphlet for him in favour of the Jesuits and against the Jansenists, he had not kept his word, but had left this new version of the "Lettres Provinciales" half written. At this time, however, he was tired of being in disgrace, and as no Frenchman of distinction was supposed to visit a foreign monarch without permission, he requested Fleury's authorization in a very flattering letter, in which he lamented

almost plaintively that he had once been loved by the prelate, but was no longer so happy. At the same time he sent him a copy of the "Anti-Machiavel," which had just come out, but without giving the name of the author, which was an open secret. Thus he got a natural opportunity of insinuating that he would be happy if the friendship with which he was honoured by Frederick could be in any way made useful to the King, and in order to remove any professional scruples which might arise on the part of a prelate, he contrived, I know not how, to allude in conclusion to his respect for religion, and the wrong that was done him by doubting it.[2] The cunning old man understood the underhand proposal at once, but took care not to seem too eager to accept it. He wrote two letters about the affair, with an interval of two days between each: both these epistles are master-pieces of what is described, in the contemporary memoirs of which I have spoken, as the unction and elegance of his style.

The first took Voltaire to task in a manner which made reproach even more flattering than compliment: "You would wrong me," he says, "if you should think I have ever wished you the slightest harm: I have only been grieved at that which you were doing to yourself. I think I understand you perfectly, you are a good and worthy man . . . but you have

[2] This letter of Voltaire's has not been found.

been young, and probably for too long. You were brought up amid a society which the world in its ignorance regarded as the best, because it was composed of nobles. They praised you, and with good reason, but they held you to be right in everything, and went too far. They spoiled you too early, and at your age this was natural. I hope you now feel this, and what pleases me most in your letter is what you say of your respect for religion. That is a great saying; let me give it, I beg of you, all the meaning my friendship for you leads me to desire. Among the many duties which an upright man is bound to fulfil, can that which concerns our Sovereign Master and Creator be excepted? Even the pagans did not think so."

The following day he resumed his pen: the Bishop having ended his sermon, the Minister took up the thread of diplomacy. Voltaire's proposal to offer his homage to his hero was fully approved of, and even likened, by a biblical comparison that was rather profane, coming from such a source, to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. Then, alluding to the present of the "Anti-Machiavel:" "whoever may be the author of the work," added the Cardinal, "if he is not a prince, he ought to be one; and the little I have read of it is so wise, so sensible, and contains principles so admirable, that if he has the courage to put them in practice he would be worthy to rule men. If he is born a prince, he

has contracted a very solemn engagement with the public. . . . Corruption is so general, and sincerity so indecently banished from all men's minds in this unhappy age, that if we did not hold firmly to those high principles which bind us not to depart from them, we should be tempted to fail on certain occasions; but the King, my Master, at least makes it plain that he does not hold it allowable to use reprisals of such a kind, since no sooner had he heard the news about the Emperor, than he assured Prince Lichtenstein he would faithfully keep all his engagements. . . . I find myself unintentionally making political reflections. Let me conclude by assuring you that I shall endeavour to be worthy of his Prussian Majesty's good opinion of me. It is a pity he is a prince, for, were he only an ordinary mortal, it would be a pleasure to meet him in society. I envy you, and I congratulate you, all the more that you owe your good fortune solely to your talents and your sentiments." [3]

I imagine that Voltaire already understood the character of his royal friend too well to credit him with any inclination to practise the puritanical morals of his youthful production, or to be encouraged in doing so by the idea of following the example of Louis XV. But he understood at once for whom the compliments and the accompanying

[3] *Correspondance Générale de Voltaire*, November 14, 1740.

discreet questions were intended, and no sooner had he arrived at Rheinsberg after a wearisome journey (whose grotesque incidents he relates), than he took care to let Fleury know that he had not been imposed upon. "I have obeyed," he writes, "the orders your Eminence did not give me, and have shown your letter to the King of Prussia."

The showing of the letter was something, but the really clever thing would have been to get an answer to it. Voltaire was, however, not able to accomplish that, notwithstanding all his adroitness during the fêtes, entertainments, and attentions of all kinds that were showered upon him for a whole week. Never had Rheinsberg been so gay, never had it boasted of amusements more varied or conversation more brilliant. The coterie of scholars and poets, among whom Maupertuis, Jordan, and Algarotti figured, exerted itself to the utmost to do honour to the French man of genius, and, at the same time, it enjoyed to the full the sense of favour in a place where it had been for so long in disgrace. The King's sisters, although in deep mourning, shared in all these pleasures, with freedom that showed how they relished their emancipation from their stern father's rule. From morning to night there was a succession of entertainments. The afternoon was devoted to music, the evening to poetry; Frederick himself at one time playing the flute, at another trying his hand, more or less successfully, at verse. But all the while military pre-

parations as active, as noisy, and as incomprehensible as ever, were going on.[4]

Frederick amused himself by slyly exciting curiosity which he did not intend to appease. One day, after he had finished off a set of verses, he said, "That is all over; the demon of war is about to snatch me from the demon of poetry." But he took care not to explain in what direction the conquering spirit was to lead him. Another day he wrote a letter to his friend Algarotti, who had to return to Berlin on account of a disease whose nature the royal pleasantries had mercilessly revealed, and the Italian (proud of the distinction) showed this letter to the French Minister in strict confidence: "You are made, my dear Algarotti, to be the witness of great events, and to take part in them by your counsels. If you ask me what Europe is doing, I will tell you that Saxony is playing at knucklebones (*osselets*); that Poland is eating salt beef and cabbage; the Grand Duke has the gangrene, and cannot make up his mind to an operation that might cure him; France means to get the better of every one, and is watching for her prey; Holland is trembling; at Rheinsberg we are dancing and playing, and Frederick . . ." Here Algarotti paused, and, folding up

[4] *Mémoires de la Margrave de Baireuth*, vol. ii. p. 327. Valori to Amelot, December 3, 1740. Voltaire, "Mémoires." See Appendix C. : for the relations of Voltaire with the French Legation at Berlin.

the letter, said that discretion prevented him from reading any more. That letter has now been printed in full, and we can understand Algarotti's scruples. The fact is that there is not one word in it concerning the intentions of Frederick, he did not speak of himself at all. Algarotti got out of it by saying he had advised the King to try for the Imperial Crown as a step towards universal monarchy, and that his Majesty had smilingly replied, "That is the advice which Antony gave to Cæsar." [5]

Everything has an end in this world, and even the pleasantest companions must part. The week came to a close, and Voltaire had to return to Berlin, and take up his quarters at the palace of the French Legation, where an apartment had been prepared for him by the Cardinal's directions. Valori, who received him there, found him rather crest-fallen. In addition to his mortification at having compromised his rising reputation as a diplomatist by returning empty-handed, he seemed to have another cause of annoyance which he did not explain. "M. de Voltaire has returned," writes Valori on the 29th November; "he is about to start for Brussels. The principal object of his journey was business connected with the print-

[5] Valori to Amelot, November 5 and 19, 1740. Frederick's letter to Algarotti has been already inserted in the *Correspondance Générale de Frédéric;* its contents differ slightly from Valori's rendering.

ing of the 'Anti-Machiavel' . . . (Voltaire had assigned this pretext). I have reason to think that the King and he have parted little pleased with one another, and that money matters have something to do with their mutual displeasure. There may perhaps be some literary quarrel between them, and the printer may be mixed up in it; add to this a little poetic rivalry, and a trifle too much sincerity in M. de Voltaire's criticism when speaking to the King himself, and it is not difficult to imagine that the two do not get on very well together. The King of Prussia pursues every kind of fame, but nothing pulls him up so short as economy."[6]

Valori, who was much more clever than he looked under his heavy and awkward exterior, had guessed aright. A difference had really taken place at the last moment between the King and the poet, and it was about money. The printer, however, was in no wise concerned in this; it was Voltaire himself who had demanded to be paid his travelling-expenses, and sent in a bill for them amounting to the exorbitant sum of 1300 crowns. Solomon, who did not expect to pay for the visits of the Queen of Sheba, and who had something better to do with his money, had naturally

[6] Valori to Amelot, November 29, 1740. In a former despatch Valori had said, "The King does not like his free-and-easy ways; he has changed his tone too quickly from that of adoration to one which is scarcely respectful."

objected, and was only induced to yield by the entreaties of his favourite librarian, Jordan. Payment was at length granted, but in what words! Poor Jordan, when reading them, might well meditate sorrowfully on the small esteem in which the great ones of the earth hold men of letters who take wages from them.

"Your miser," said the King, "shall drink the dregs of his desire to enrich himself; he shall have his 1300 crowns. His six days' visit will cost me 500*l.* That is good pay for a fool. No court jester ever had such wages!"[7]

When days cost so much, they were not to be spun out. Voltaire was therefore obliged to depart without any light having been thrown upon the political situation. He was, however, none the less desirous to make his report to Fleury, and even to have a personal interview with him. "He wanted to prove," says Valori, "that if he had not been a good Frenchman up to the present, he was now thoroughly converted." More than one conference took place between the three French diplomatists before they could agree upon the statement which was to be made at Versailles.

Their impressions were different, those of the Marquis de Beauvau were very gloomy. According to him, Frederick detested France, and only

[7] Frederick to Jordan, November 28, 1740. *Correspondance Générale.*

desired to do her a bad turn; his armament was merely the first act of a coalition which he was plotting with Austria, England, and all our enemies. Beauvau added (and it was true), that to his knowledge Camas had brought back very bad accounts of the state of the French army and administration, and that at Rheinsberg it was the fashion to speak of France in a disdainful and almost insulting manner. Voltaire, whose conscience could not fail to reproach him with having listened to talk of this kind, did not dare to utter a contradiction. Valori, who was more reserved, simply gave it as his opinion, that we had to do with an ambitious man who was ready to turn to any side that might offer him the greatest advantage. "You are right," said Voltaire, "he will attempt something, I do not know what, and then, if he fails, he will turn philosopher again." [8]

Where France could discover nothing, England tried her hand, but was not more fortunate. The English Chargé-d'affaires, Captain Guy Dickens, using his ambassadorial privilege, got access to the King, and point blank asked him to say plainly whether he intended to maintain the Pragmatic Sanction and the indivisibility of the Austrian Empire. "What am I," he frankly asked, "to write to England on this subject?" Frederick's face flushed. "I know," he replied haughtily, "that

[8] Valori to Amelot, December 2, 1740.

you have no instructions which authorize you to put such a question, but, if you have received any, I have only one answer to make, England has no right to ask what are my plans. I do not question her about her equipments; I content myself with hoping that you may not be beaten by the Spaniards."

"I answered," writes the English agent, "that it was not from indiscreet curiosity that I questioned him, but because I was uneasy at seeing that he was engaging in an enterprise of which he might afterwards have cause to repent. The King then spoke a little more openly; he said: 'But I have only the general good in view. I have carefully considered my plans; I have weighed the advantages and disadvantages which might result from them to me and to the public, and I have come to the conclusion that I cannot do better than carry them out rigorously. Austria is a necessary power to keep down the Turks, but she ought not to be so powerful in Germany that three Electoral States should be unable to cope with her. I know very well that you, like France, want to keep all the princes in leading-strings, but I will not be led by either of you; and so far as you are concerned you are just like the Athenians, who wasted their time in talking, while Philip of Macedon was getting ready to attack them." [9]

[9] Räumer, *Beiträge zur neuen Geschichte*, l. ii. p. 82 and following.

While all this was stirring at Berlin, one would have thought that Vienna would have been still more excited; but, strange to say, of all the political centres of Europe, Vienna was that one which concerned itself least with the warlike preparations of Frederick. It was not the fault of Demerath, the Austrian resident at Berlin, for he had given warning from the very first day. But the young Queen met his gloomy forebodings with an incredulous smile. Maria Theresa, with courage and genius beyond her years, still retained the ingenuous confidingness and some of the illusions of youth. She believed in goodness, in honour, in all those noble sentiments which she herself possessed, because she had not yet suffered either from human perversity or from the callous egotism of politicians; so she refused to doubt the sincerity of Fleury's protestations or the gratitude of a prince whose life had been saved by her father. The Grand Duke also, who had known Frederick in his youth, relied on his friendship, and Frederick had confirmed the young couple in their good opinion of him by recognizing their royal title, and by inducing the King of Poland to do the same. This was a deceptive act; its object was to be revealed in the future, but at first it gave so much satisfaction at Vienna, that the Grand Duke said to the Prussian minister: "Really the King is behaving like a father to the Queen and myself

and we shall never be able to repay our obligations to him."

Maria Theresa, who implicitly believed that she had found in this good neighbour one who would interest himself in her most cherished project, was actually simple enough to ask Frederick's vote and interest with the Electoral Assembly in favour of the Grand Duke, and she promised him in return her unchangeable affection. As for her aged councillors, if they did not exactly share the blindness of the wedded pair, their inaction confirmed it. When the restlessness of the King of Prussia was spoken of, they would shrug their shoulders, and say, "Do not be afraid; he will be just like his father, who all his life kept his gun loaded, and never once fired it." Old Bartenstein only was anxious. "We do not know this young man," he would say, "and I made the same remark to the late Emperor, when he persisted in writing to his father to beg him to spare his life."[1]

Towards the end of November, however, the clouds on the political horizon became too dark to be ignored by even the least keen-sighted. An alarming concentration of troops was taking place on the frontier of Silesia, where the Austrian dominions touched those of Prussia, and at the same time the attitude of the Prussian minister at

[1] D'Arneth, t. i. p. 110. Droysen, t. i. p. 172. Räumer, *Beiträge zur neuen Geschichte*, t. ii. p. 102, and following.

Vienna, General Borck, which had been extremely amicable, underwent a significant change. He assumed a tone of affected sympathy with reference to the desperate condition of the House of Austria, which had, according to him, too many enemies to be able to maintain its position without assistance. It needed allies, he remarked, but allies must be paid for, as nothing is to be had for nothing on this nether earth. The sentence I have quoted from Frederick's letter to Algarotti, which said that the Grand Duke had the gangrene, and could only be cured by a painful operation, was in the mouth of every one, and gave rise to many commentaries. The metaphor of "the gangrene" was clear enough, but what was the operation, and who was the surgeon that would offer to perform it? A clear understanding of those conditional offers which no one had solicited, at the cost of indefinite sacrifices, must be arrived at, and it was arranged that the Marchese Botta d'Adorno, an old Italian of great experience, should be sent to Berlin with that intention.

Botta was a fellow-countryman of Machiavelli, and had studied, and perhaps occasionally practised his maxims in his previous career, although he had not employed his youth in refuting them. He had no sooner passed the frontier and seen the military preparations, than he perceived the truth: all was ready for an aggressive expedition, of which Silesia only could be the object. He arrived

at Berlin in a state of agitation, by no means allayed by the audience that he speedily obtained, and at which he gained no information whatever. Frederick seemed to expect a proposal of some kind, instead of being prepared to make one, and did not lead the way to any overture. When Botta, to bring the conversation round to the subject of warlike preparations, complained of the bad state of the roads which had been cut up by the moving of troops during the autumn, the king replied coolly, "I do not think that signifies much, except that travellers are apt to get rather muddy." Towards the end of the interview, however, he condescended to say that his minister at Vienna had been directed to make his intentions known to the Queen, and that in order to complete these explanations, he was about to send Count Gotter, his Grand Marshal, to Maria Theresa. "Let the Queen reflect well upon my communications," he added, "and she will see how reasonable are my views, and how pure my intentions. Assure her of my attachment."

Botta took leave of the king in a state of greater fear and indignation than ever, and he was especially provoked that nobody would believe either in his fear or his anger. No sooner was his arrival announced, than the rumour spread like wild-fire through Berlin, that he was the bearer of a treaty of alliance offering the cession of the whole or a part of Silesia, in return for Frederick's consent to the

election of the Grand Duke. This soon became the general conviction, and it seemed to be confirmed by appearances. What other explanation was to be given of the coming of an ambassador who had nothing to say, and who went away, according to his own account, without having learned anything? or of the departure of another envoy bearing protestations of friendship and regard, but who had to travel by a road already lined with troops on a war footing? How was this complication to be accounted for, except by a private agreement which was to be kept secret to the last moment! Botta's denials, even his oaths, went for nothing. He was congratulated on his skill in concealing his game, although they did not intend to be taken in by it; and when Botta affirmed that Austria would resist any invasion of its provinces, he would be met with, "That is good! We shall have another comedy! You want to have Silesia taken from you, to surrender it to force only, so that it may not be said that it is you yourselves who renounce the Pragmatic Sanction."

Besides this, those who were about Frederick gave weight to the rumour by the very manner in which they contradicted it. Valori alone was still in doubt, "for," said he, sensibly enough, "if they are agreed, why all this commotion, and what do we want with so many soldiers?" For all that, he reported to his own Court what was the

general opinion. "M. de Botta arrived here," he writes on the 3rd of December, "feeling or pretending to feel, great surprise at all the warlike preparations which he observed in Silesia; he denies any agreement between the Grand Duke and the King." And on the 6th, "M. de Botta had an interview with the King, who assured him of his devotion to the Queen of Hungary. He is quite taken aback; what does it all mean?" And again on the 10th, "M. de Botta is very angry; if he is playing a part, he does it wonderfully well."[2] But on the evening of this very 10th of December, Frederick himself sent for Botta, and, telling him that he intended to assume the personal command of his troops, explained to him the mysterious plan that had kept every one in suspense for the past six weeks.

What his plan was, is well-known. It was nothing less than to seize upon Silesia—the formal demand being made to Maria Theresa simultaneously with the capture of the province—without either declaration of war or any kind of preliminary warning. All contemporary documents bear witness to the indignation aroused in all who entertained the smallest regard for honour and morality by this perfidious conduct, which burst like a bombshell upon astonished Europe. Time, success, and fame have since then produced the usual

[2] Valori to Amelot, 3rd, 6th, 10th December, 1740 (*Correspondance de Prusse*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

effect, and this cry of conscience has been but feebly echoed by posterity. There have even been historians out of Germany, and in particular one celebrated English writer, Carlyle, who have ventured to justify Frederick's action. The archivists of Berlin seem bent upon reviving the contemporary impression, which was becoming effaced, for it is they who by their recent revelations have shown us, to what an extent the sufficiently odious character of this enterprise was aggravated, even in its first stages, by the hypocrisy and deceit which marked its clandestine elaboration.

In the first place, we find, from a comparison of the dates of the different documents published at Berlin, that the very day on which the death of Charles VI. was announced, Frederick made his intention of robbing the daughter of his benefactor known to his ministers. That he chose Silesia in preference to any other portion of the patrimony of Maria Theresa, is accounted for by the contiguity of that province to his own States, a contiguity which was not only a convenience, but which also made the seizure a much easier undertaking. As for the rights which he could allege in justification of this forcible annexation, I have several reasons, for not entering upon that subject: the first is that we shall find this side of the question never occupied Frederick's mind; the second is that those rights, if they ever existed,

had lapsed many centuries before, by virtue of the tutelary law of prescription which ancient law-givers have termed the benefactor of the human race. Were it even true, as Droysen tries to prove from legal and diplomatic documents, that some of the duchies of Silesia had formerly belonged to the Electors of Brandenburg, and were only ceded by them in exchange for another principality, which was promised but never given to them, what does that signify? since the most recent of these proceedings, whether true or false, dates from 1660, and since that period Austria and Prussia had lived in peace for eighty-four years, had signed more than one treaty of alliance, and had fought on the same side even so recently as in the last war. If it be allowable, after so long a period of oblivion, to revive dormant pretensions, what prince, or even what subject—as Macaulay remarks—could sleep in peace? Let us be as frank as Frederick himself, and accept the confession he made to Voltaire—and which Voltaire out of decency induced him to refrain from proclaiming to posterity,—that he had no rights to invoke, save such as he derived from "*his troops which were ready to act*," and from his "*well-filled exchequer.*" We also have to add those furnished by the weakness and the evil fortune of Maria Theresa.[3]

[3] Voltaire says in his "Memoirs," that Frederick having entrusted to him the MS. of his *Histoire de mon Temps*, he

Orders were given to the two ministers, Podewils and Schwerin, to prepare for the execution of a project whose propriety they had neither time nor permission to discuss; and in obedience to this command, they set to work, as they expressed it, in language as noble and as elevated as their sentiments, "to chew and digest this business." If the digestion was difficult, it was not protracted, for by the 29th of October they had submitted to the King a detailed statement of two plans, one of which might succeed in case of the failure of the other.

The following is the gist of this double programme. There are, say the commissaries, two courses to pursue. The first and safest, the least exposed to "those reverses and mishaps to which great acquisitions are subject," would consist in obtaining the desired cession voluntarily from the Court of Vienna, by promising, in exchange, the active assistance of Prussia in the perils by which it was menaced, by preserving the imperial crown to it, and defending it *contra quoscumque*. As it was to be expected, that even at this price the Queen would find it difficult to resign herself to the loss of so important a possession as Silesia, the best means of inducing her to do so, would be the offer of "a couple of millions," for her pressing pecuniary needs. If

made him erase the following sentence: "Troops always ready to act, my well-filled treasury, and the vivacity of my disposition —these were my reasons for making war upon Maria Theresa."

the Court of Vienna had the good sense to accept these benevolent offers with due gratitude, then it would be well to gain the adherence of the maritime powers, of Russia, and of all those who might remember the ambition of Louis XIV. with misgiving, and to show them what a great service the King proposed to render to the common cause of the European balance of power, by saving the only throne that could make head against the House of Bourbon from certain danger.

But supposing the Court of Vienna should have the "obstinacy and bigotry" not to appreciate the proffered service, what was to be done? In that case it would be necessary to adopt a less safe and more difficult method; to turn round boldly with offers of friendship to all the enemies of Maria Theresa; Saxony, Bavaria, and even France, to whose advantage it might be to deprive the descendants of Charles V. of the imperial crown. The conquest of Silesia should be represented to them as the first act of a powerful diversion made in the North in their interest. Of course, there would no longer be any question of protecting the balance of power in Europe against France; the intention, on the contrary, would then be to defend German liberties from Austrian encroachments. Lastly, there remained a third mode of action; one which would be simply perfect. In the event of a third power, Saxony or Bavaria for instance, taking the initiative

by sending troops into Silesia, the King should march into that province by way of defending it, and retain possession of it. It was, however, hardly reasonable to hope for so favourable a chance as that.[4]

To this document, which resembles in its style, as well as in its ideas, that in which Molière's famous usurer duns the 'hard up' minor, the King, fully satisfied with the zeal of his servants, made only one amendment. The advisers suggested negotiations with the court of Vienna, but Frederick considered it would save time to seize upon the province first, and carry on the negotiations afterwards. "It suited him better," says Droysen (who highly approves of his proceedings), "to act on the recommendation of the Spanish proverb, Take first, and ask afterwards."

This method, more familiar to brigands than to diplomatists, might have alarmed timid minds, so Frederick at first suggested it tentatively. "I give you," he says to Podewils, "a problem to solve. When one is in a good position, should one take advantage of it or not? My troops and I are quite ready for anything; if I do not make use of this good fortune, I fail to use an instrument which is actually in my hand, but if I do use it, people will say I have taken a shabby advantage of my superiority over my neighbours."[5]

[4] "Pol. Corr." t. i. p. 74, and following. [5] Ibid, p. 84.

As Podewils did not understand, or pretended not to understand, it was necessary for Frederick to explain himself more clearly, which he did by an autograph note ending with these words: "I decide that we ought to take possession of Silesia before the winter, and to negotiate during that season . . . by acting otherwise, we put ourselves out of our advantages."[6]

Let us do justice to the prudent minister: he was so frightened at the idea of an instant appeal to arms, and at the greatness of the stake for which it was proposed to play, that his scruples were aroused by alarm; the rights of the crown of Brandenburg over Silesia no longer appeared so clear to him, and he respectfully represented to the King, that, however well founded the claims of his royal house might be, some solemn treaties, upon whose provisions Austria would be sure to take her stand, existed. The King immediately sent back his humble remonstrance with this simple note on the margin: "The article of rights is the affair of the ministers, and your own. It is time to occupy yourself with it . . . for the orders to the troops are given."[7] Upon this, Podewils writes in a melancholy tone to his colleague: "The King's ardour increases rather than lessens. After having said all I think . . . there is nothing for us but the merit of obedience. If

[6] "Pol. Corr." t. i. p. 91.

[7] Ibid. p. 90.

only some external pretext might arise to justify this advance! But no. What is most distressing is that Vienna does not make us any proposal whatever. They are as silent as the dead there. Moreover, the King of Poland will not stir until Bavaria does. Would to heaven they would make some move!"[8]

When a traveller is to be robbed on the high road, it is essential that it should not be known, and if the highwayman can pass for a friend travelling with the victim, so much the better. Secrecy was, then, of supreme importance to Frederick's plans, and something more than secrecy, that is, deception. It was necessary, not merely that his purpose, as well as the time of its execution, should be concealed until the decisive moment, but that on the very day when the troops were to cross the frontier, they should appear to come there with the consent, and at the call, of the legitimate sovereigns of the invaded province. In this way no defensive measure would be taken, and the invaded people themselves, believing they had to do with allies, would make no resistance.

With this honest intention, everything was done to keep up the delusion to the last; thus we have the explanation of that eager recognition of the rights of Maria Theresa, which brought tears to the eyes of the innocent young queen, and

[8] Droysen, t. i. p. 143.

which was only intended to lull her into a false security. At the same moment, in fact, the Prussian Minister at Vienna received communication of all the details of the projected invasion, with orders to feign complete ignorance, and to contradict every rumour of it which might be circulated. The "Correspondance Politique" also makes us acquainted with a series of despatches addressed to Prussian agents at the various Courts, all full of declarations of friendship for the Imperial House. These protestations were especially warm in quarters where there was a chance that their purport might be made known to Austria. A different tone is taken with Versailles; discreet allusions are made in that instance to the advantage it would be to Germany to emancipate herself from the preponderating influence of Austria. This was necessary in order that the way might be cleared for opposite modes of action, as circumstances might indicate. It is noticeable, however, that either because the desire of cajoling Austria was at first stronger than any other feeling, or because, as the Marquis de Beauvau suspected, hatred of France was with Frederick so irresistible a sentiment that he could not suppress it, his language with respect to the ministers of Louis XV. is always disdainful, and almost insulting, even when he prescribes their being conciliated with a view to the eventuality of a possible alliance.

All this is brought out clearly in a note so extremely confidential that we are surprised at the courageous candour which has revealed it. The note is a paper in two columns, having on one side the questions of the minister (Podewils) and on the other the answers of Frederick. The minister asks in what light the intentions of the King are to be represented at St. Petersburg, the Hague, and London. The King replies: "At each Court in a different manner: in London, it must be said that, having certain knowledge that the Duke of Lorraine is going to make an agreement with France, I am making approaches to Vienna, so as to oblige them to take the side of the sailors and religion (the maritime and Protestant powers). At the Hague we must say that nothing against the peace of Europe is intended, that Frederick William made himself useful to the Emperor Leopold, and met with nothing but ingratitude, but I mean to recompense myself first, and do service afterwards. At Hanover, at Mayence, we must talk about the necessity of heart-felt patriotism, and say that I want to support the Empire, and protect a House which is as yet weak." "But," replies the minister, "in explaining to the French ministers your Majesty's intentions in general, should we not give them covertly to understand that this enterprise might turn to the greatest advantages for France?" Answer: "Good, we must use fair means with these . . . ."[9]

[9] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 99 and 100.

This is what Droysen calls a grand political combination, in which he sees the germ from which the German Fatherland has sprung. "Before Frederick's time," says the Prussian historian, "a man was either an Austrian or a Frenchman, never a German. Frederick is the first who had a policy of his own, a policy that was truly independent, and really national. If Germany had existed then," he exclaims with enthusiasm, "she would have understood that Frederick was serving her cause."

It might be observed that for a German prince to seek assistance in his projects, from within or from without the common country, indifferently, according as either would serve his personal interest, appears to be the reverse of patriotism. But every one holds his own view about national feeling, and in this matter, also, there is no disputing about taste.

We are still less disposed to agree with Droysen when he adds, with true German gravity, that the conduct of Frederick was the strict application of those moral and puritan doctrines which he had professed in his "Anti-Machiavel." But I must pause here, for a discussion of the morals of the case would bring up still graver points.

Whether the device was moral or not, and chiefly, perhaps, because it was not, it was effectual in creating and keeping up the optical delusion by which the European and German public were, for a short time, beguiled. Even in his

decisive interview with Botta, Frederick tried to maintain this delusion, for, after he had revealed his intentions, he said, in an insinuating tone: "I am going to Silesia, but, you understand, as a good friend (*come buono amico*); not so much to establish any rights I may have, as to defend the hereditary rights of the Queen against all her enemies, especially Saxony and Bavaria, who are ready to attack her. I want to place the Imperial crown on the head of the Grand Duke."

The wary Italian had self-command enough to keep an impassive countenance. He let the King finish his speech, and then said, with an ironical smile: "I did not, then, deceive myself when I believed your Majesty to be most affectionately disposed towards the Queen, my sovereign, although I confess that more than one person at Vienna holds such confidence on my part to be absolutely heroic (*puro eroismo*); but I must beg your Majesty to observe that neither Saxony nor Bavaria makes any sign of attacking us, and should they think of doing so, my sovereign is able to defend herself, if your Majesty will only be content with looking on, especially as those two Powers would find it difficult to act in concert." The King began again to protest, but Botta at last lost patience, and said haughtily, "Your troops are fine, Sire, but ours have smelt powder." "If mine are fine," returned the King, "they are also

good, and you will soon find it out." Then he rose, terminating the interview abruptly.[1]

This conversation had been timed so that the courier who carried the news of it to Vienna should arrive only a few hours before Frederick's new envoy. He had the start of him so far, however, that when Count Gotter arrived, he found the news already spread, the town in commotion, and indignation at its height, especially in diplomatic circles. The only topic was the design of the King of Prussia. "If such a thing be done," said the English minister, "the King will be excommunicated by the society of governments." The young Queen was by this time sufficiently well known to make it certain that she could neither be bewildered by surprise nor affected by threats. Count Gotter, warned of the reception that awaited him, took a high tone, and at once assumed the position of the Roman Proconsul who carried peace or war in the folds of his toga. Instead of sending his request as usual through the ministers or chamberlains, he asked directly for an audience of the Grand Duke.

After the first words, "I bear," said he, "in one hand the salvation of the House of Austria, and in the other the Imperial Crown for your Highness. The treasury of the King my master is at the service of the Queen; he will also secure to her the assistance of his allies, England, Holland, and Russia. In

[1] D'Arneth, vol. i. p. 115. Droysen, vol. i. p. 164.

return for these offers, and to compensate for the peril he incurs by making them, he demands the whole of Silesia, but nothing less. The King's determination is immovable; he will, he can take Silesia, and if it be not offered to him with a good grace, he will give his troops and his money to Saxony and Bavaria, who are soliciting him to do so." This was entirely false; neither Saxony nor Bavaria had made the shadow of a proposition. But perhaps Gotter himself was the dupe of his master's falsehoods.

The Grand Duke's answer was calm and dignified. "The Queen," he said, "had neither the right nor the power to cede a particle of the territory which she received only on the condition of keeping it indivisible. She is not reduced to such despair that she must throw herself into the arms of a prince who enters her States as an enemy, and whatever harm may be done to her by the King of Prussia, we may hope that he will do more harm to himself." "If this is the case," said Gotter, "I have nothing to do here, and may take my departure." The Grand Duke resumed, asking him categorically whether the Prussian troops were or were not at that moment on the soil of Silesia. "They must be there by this time," answered the envoy. "Return then to your master, and tell him that, so long as he leaves one man upon the territory of that province, we will perish rather than treat with him. But if he still can pause, or if

he will withdraw, we are willing to negotiate with him at Berlin. Botta has his instructions already, and as for me, neither for the Imperial Crown, nor for the whole world, would I sacrifice any single right of the Queen's, nor one inch of her legitimate and hereditary realm."

Gotter, taken aback by the Grand Duke's bearing, lowered his tone in some degree. "You cannot seriously ask the King," he said, "to draw back from an enterprise which is already so far advanced." "When an enterprise is manifestly unjust," said the Grand Duke, "it is more honourable in the eyes of the world to renounce it than to persevere in it. But if the King needs an excuse for the withdrawal of his troops, he may say that his object in the advance was to defend the Queen against attack by Bavaria, and that he found his assistance was not needed." Gotter reflected for a moment upon this overture; it was not one in reality, but it possessed the advantage of preventing an immediate rupture, and then, as if he were granting a favour—though none had been asked of him—he consented to write to Frederick, and wait for his answer.[2]

The Grand Duke's language had been so clear, so firm, so unlike what might have been expected from his undecided character, that every one understood by whom these terms had been dictated. He had spoken too as if the Queen were present, and, in

[2] D'Arneth, vol. i. p. 120.

fact, during one of the subsequent interviews, she was so near the door that, at a certain moment, thinking things had gone far enough, she called her husband, and took him away with her. Gotter, who, of course, ought to have insisted on seeing her, did not even venture to ask for an audience, for fear, as he wrote to Podewils, of confirming the rupture, but in reality to avoid the odium of a scene of violence with a woman. The murmur of disapprobation which came to him from all sides troubled him, notwithstanding his apparent boldness. "All is in commotion here," he writes; "the tocsin is sounded, the cry of 'fire' is raised. I congratulate myself on not having pushed matters too far. The King is an intelligent prince who will, I hope, find a honourable way out of this business." He was more explicit with the English ambassador; to him he said, "You do not know my sovereign. You do not know how obstinate and presumptuous he is. He is a strange mixture of ambition and avarice."[3] Then Gotter, to get out of his own difficulty, left Vienna on the pretext that, while waiting for an answer to his despatches, he would take a course of baths at a neighbouring spa, although the middle of winter was not exactly the season for trying the cure.[4]

Gotter knew well that it was too late to recall

[3] Droysen, t. i. p. 178.

[4] Ibid., l. i. p. 180. D'Arneth, t. i. p. 127. Räumer, t. ii. p. 21.

Frederick to moderation. He had spoken the truth when he said that the Prussian troops were already on Silesian territory. He had been received by the Grand Duke on the 20th, and on the 16th Frederick had left Berlin to take the command of his forces. It is probable that Botta's demeanour had convinced him he had no weakness to expect from the Court of Vienna, for, just before his departure, he sent for the Marquis de Valori, to whom he had not spoken for six weeks. Valori arrived, much puzzled, and wondering whether the clash of arms which prevailed everywhere implied a pretence or a reality. The first interview was too vague to relieve his uncertainty; for the King, far from explaining himself, tried to make the marquis speak. "I am still waiting," he said, "to hear what the Cardinal thinks, and what the King your master is going to do for me." He then launched forth in praise of the Cardinal, and as Valori, no doubt, revealed by some significant look that he well knew this tone had not been usual at Rheinsberg: "Ah!" he said, "you must not mind any little jests which may escape me; that is my manner; I am sorry for it; but in reality I yield to none in my esteem, and even veneration, for a great man who is endowed with so many remarkable qualities. On my word, sir, he is the greatest man France has ever produced."

"As for the military preparation," adds Valori

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(immediately transmitting the compliment to the Cardinal himself), "he tells me I need not be at all uneasy; that it does not interfere in the slightest degree with any views we may have; that I shall be one of the first to be informed of his reasons and motives, which he considers well founded; and that the King must not take umbrage at it." All this, however, was so vague that Valori says, "I incline to think he has an understanding with the Grand Duke, and that your Eminence is aware of this." [5]

The second conversation was more significant. Frederick plainly asked whether it was not the intention, as it was the interest, of France, to take the Imperial Crown from the House of Austria, and to give it to the Elector of Bavaria, and whether, in that case, the King would not be glad to have him as an ally? Observe that, at this very time, the crown had been offered to the Grand Duke in his name.

"I answered," says Valori, "that it was impossible for me to form any conjecture respecting the views of your Eminence, but that I believed myself authorized to assure him that the King would respond, with pleasure, to any steps taken by him to unite them; and as he added upon this that he had several projects, which were all in accordance with the interests of France, I asked him whether he would favour me by communicating one of

[5] Valori to the Cardinal, December 10, 1740 (*Correspondance de Prusse*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

them to me, which I would instantly send off by a courier. He said, that before he did this, he must know what were the ideas of the Cardinal, that I might tell him he had despatched Count Truchsess to England, but that he would recall him so soon as he should have an assurance that the King was ready to treat with him. I then told him it was publicly reported in Vienna that he had made engagements with the Grand Duke, and had even secured to him three votes for the Imperial dignity. His answer was, that this was a great mistake, *that his vote was still to be had* (*à louer*), but that if he did not see his way to forming an alliance with the King, he would seek for friends to second his views; that for his own part, he cared little who might be Emperor, and that his conduct in this respect would be regulated by his own interests or those of his allies, but he wished again to repeat that his friendship was not to be despised, for it was in his power to forward any plans the King might have; that his aggrandizement could give no offence, and that he stood naturally in the position of the King's northern ally . . . in short, that there were a good many things which we could do together.

"I replied that it was impossible to doubt the intention of the King to do everything that could contribute to strengthen the bonds of amity between them. 'All that, my friend,' he replied, 'has

been merely talk up to the present time; we have never, till this moment, had an opportunity of doing anything worth the doing; the time has now come for me to know whether the Cardinal wants me or not. . . . If he does, the affair will not be long delayed; I will give you my ideas, and should like to be informed of his. I warn you that I am in haste, and must know what I am to depend upon. No one can do more good to the house of Bavaria than I, or more ably forward your master's views without compromising him in any way. After we have parleyed for some time, the King may pose as mediator. There will be negotiations, and he will pronounce as we have agreed. You must own, that I am giving him a part which equally suits his dignity and his taste.' 'Be assured, my dear friend,' he continued, 'that it is a mistake to think all this can take place without swords being drawn. The young people must lead off the dance. After all, if I extend my territories on this side what does it matter to you? Ought you not to be very glad that I should do my business on these terms? If the King reflects, he will see that my alliance is not to be despised.' He then explained that the best plan would be to unite the two crowns by a defensive alliance, into which the northern powers, Sweden and Denmark, should be induced to enter."[6]

[6] Valori to Amelot, December 13, 1740.

Valori left the King's presence more troubled than ever, still distrusting the sincerity of the speaker, and very much alarmed at the idea of giving him an eventual security against the consequences of his adventure by means of a defensive treaty. Meeting Podewils on his way, he tried to draw him out by pretending to know what he only suspected. "You are not aware," said he, as he shook hands warmly with the minister, "but I can tell you that the King, your master, is in correspondence with the Grand Duke, and that they have come to an understanding." Podewils went off immediately to communicate this pretended confidence to Frederick. "Bah!" replied the King, in a confidential note, "cajole him as you are well able to do, and make him believe that I shall never dissever my interest from that of France." To the Marquis de Beauvau, who had come to take leave, he said, in a loud and emphatic voice, so as to be heard and repeated, "I am going to play for a high stake, and if I turn up aces, we will go shares." That evening there was a masquerade at the palace; Frederick appeared in a domino, unmasked, took part merrily in every amusement, talked at some length, in a window, with the English Minister, and when the guests were taking leave, said to the officers who surrounded him, "Grease your boots, we are off." [7]

[7] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 147, 148. Voltaire, "Mémoires." Frederick, "Histoire de mon Temps."

Two days after this, they had crossed the frontier, and he wrote from his headquarters at Schleidnitz, the first post in Silesia: "I have passed the Rubicon, my dear Podewils, drums beating and colours flying; my troops are willing, the officers are ambitious, the generals eager for fame; all will be as we wish; a certain instinct for which we cannot account assures me of every kind of good fortune. I shall not reappear in Berlin without having made myself worthy of my origin, and of the brave soldiers whom I have the honour to command. Adieu. May God have you in His keeping." [8]

While Frederick was marching upon the capital of Silesia, along the high road to Vienna, a courier, carrying letters from Valori and Beauvau to the Cardinal, was on his way to France. The communications of the two envoys did not tally. Beauvau, still convinced of the ill-will, and even the enmity of Frederick, believed immediate action on the part of France to be necessary; in his opinion she ought either to unite with Bavaria and Prussia against Austria, so as to have her part in the spoils, or come to the aid of the latter, and make her pay for the aid afforded. But in one way or the other, something must be done, otherwise the daring prince would take advantage of his first success to effect a reconciliation with Maria Theresa, and

[8] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 147, 148. Voltaire, "Mémoires."

France would have to cope with the two young monarchs at the same moment. "I fear," he said, "that your Eminence is not aware how dangerous a sovereign the King of Prussia is. His conduct is more like a romance than history, but the romance may produce fatal consequences." Valori was more reserved; in his opinion it would be wiser to wait and allow Frederick to set Germany in a blaze without overt interference. "This course," he said, "would make every one seek our alliance, but would not give rise to jealousy." [9]

The question for France was, then, whether to associate herself with Frederick's unscrupulous ambition, or to oppose it, or merely to await, fully prepared, the favourable moment for appearing on the troubled scene. Such were the three courses, among which French diplomatists had to choose. Strange to say, this decision, perhaps the gravest that ever fell to the lot of a minister of France, and whose ultimate consequences it has taken more than a century to evolve, rested with an aged statesman who had reached the confines of human life.

[9] Beauvau to Amelot, December 17, 1748 (*Correspondance de Prusse*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## CHAPTER II.

Intervention of France—State of Europe, and of the Empire at the commencement of the war—The policy which should have been pursued by France with regard to the German quarrel—Why that policy was not adopted—Reminiscences of the contest carried on, for two centuries, against the house of Austria—The success of that struggle had rendered it useless to protract it—Indecision in the Council of Louis XV. —The Court carries the day against the government, who therefore decide upon supporting the aggressions of Frederick and the claims of the Elector of Bavaria—Count de Belle-Isle—His birth, the opening of his career, his disposition—The first interview of Belle-Isle with Fleury—Fleury unwillingly follows Belle-Isle's advice—Effect of the intervention of France—Frederick becomes master of the position—Both England and France make advances to him—A second interview between Frederick and Valori—He demands active intervention from France—England offers to mediate, but this proposal is rejected by Maria Theresa—The people of Silesia revolt—Frederick becomes uneasy—He makes advances to France—Belle-Isle is sent to Germany as ambassador to the Electoral Diet—State of Europe at the opening of the Diet — England — Holland — Russia — Sweden —The pretensions of Spain in Italy—Secret designs of the King of Sardinia—State of the Empire—Dismemberment and powerlessness of the German nation—Nominal power of the Emperor, the government, the administration of justice, and the armies of the Empire—Religious dissensions—They intensify political divisions—Irritation against France is shared by all parties in Germany—Cause of that irritation—Effect of this feeling on the part played by Frederick and by Prussia in Germany.

An anecdote that we find in all the memoirs of the time, gives a striking picture of the mood in which

the events that were occurring in Germany found Louis XV., his ministers, and his Court. When the death of Charles VI. and its probable results were discussed at Versailles, the King, who had at first remained silent, at length remarked carelessly, in his usual languid tone, "There is but one thing for us to do, and that is to keep quiet on the Mont Pagnote,"[1] on which the Marquis de Souvré exclaimed eagerly, "Your Majesty would find it cold, for none of your ancestors has ever built up there."

The King's remark is characteristic from its very triviality. We completely recognize Louis XV. in it, with the clear perception and practical good sense that were his by nature; precious gifts by which France never profited, because, to be worthy of a king, they needed to be elevated by generosity, and sustained by strength of will, and Louis XV. possessed neither. The reply of the courtier is still more significant, for it shows us, in a single phrase, into how fatal a path an ill-understood tradition, which had become the object of a false point of honour, was about to betray France.

If we consider the various courses that might have been adopted by the government of Louis XV., at this crisis which involved France, as well as all Europe, we find two, different indeed, but not opposed, or altogether irreconcilable, either of which might fairly have been adopted.

[1] "*Rester sur le Monte Pagnote.*" See Note in Appendix to Vol. I.

The one was, perhaps, in more exact accordance with the dictates of the point of honour; the other was more appropriate to the legitimate suggestions of national interest. The King of France might hasten, not only to confirm the recognition of engagements he had entered into by the treaty of 1738, with regard to the order of succession as defined by the Pragmatic Sanction, but to promise and prepare for their execution. This would have been to forestall Maria Theresa's appeal, by a chivalrous impulse, which, I own, is neither customary nor obligatory between sovereigns. Again, he might, without any breach of his promises, avoid any explanation respecting the mode of fulfilling them, until the daughter of Charles VI. should be forced by necessity to call upon her allies for help. When that day came, he could not be blamed, if, before entering on an expensive campaign, he were to stipulate on behalf of his people, for compensation proportionate to the pecuniary sacrifices they would have to make, or to the perils they would have to encounter in defence of the Imperial cause. The opportunity would speedily have presented itself, as we have seen. The sudden invasion of Silesia placed the good faith of one of the sureties of the Pragmatic Sanction in advantageous contrast with the perfidy of the other, and, as nothing is absolutely gratuitous in politics, Austria might fairly have been asked to reward the loyalty of a faithful ally at a price, which

would have appeared to be moderate, regarded in the light of that comparison. Such a line of action would, moreover, have naturally ensued upon that so wisely taken by the conventions of 1738. By allowing Maria Theresa to select the husband whom she preferred, Fleury had obtained, at that time, not only the cession of Lorraine, but also the advantage of securing the continuity of our territory on the eastern side up to the strong barrier of the Vosges. And now, in 1740, by promoting the elevation of her beloved consort to the Imperial dignity, Fleury might fairly propose to obtain some analogous concession, some dismemberment of the Low Countries, or of Luxemburg, by which our northern frontier would be thrown back, and brought nearer to the Rhine. It will be shown by the sequel that Maria Theresa would have consented with little hesitation to even a considerable sacrifice of this nature. It is, also, only natural to suppose that she would have preferred an honourable ally, who would have asked no more than the eventual cession of a fragment detached from her distant possessions in return for his assistance, to an insolent aggressor, like Frederick, who aimed at the very heart of her empire. That fragment of territory, of little value to Maria Theresa, would have completed the defence and the unity of our own national soil.

These, no doubt, were the chances foreseen by

Louis XV., and for which he thought it well to wait, his natural indolence contributing, no doubt, both to his previsions and his patience. This view was even more strongly taken by his aged minister, who, as I have said, was naturally disposed to play the waiting game, and had, indeed, done so to the extent of encouraging the hopes of Bavaria and the audacity of Prussia by his indecision. The least he could have proposed to himself was to take adroit advantage of a situation he had helped to create. First to encourage, and then to trade upon the affections and the wounded pride of a young woman, was a game that came easy to an octogenarian, whose age, while it rendered him insensible to the passions of the heart, made him all the more skilful in manipulating its weaknesses.

France, in short, had to choose between an act of almost ideal disinterestedness, and a course, which, though one of calculation, was yet moderately and sufficiently honourable. Except these two, the only line she could take was that of breaking all her engagements, without either provocation or excuse, and throwing herself blindfold into the hazards of a continental aggression, on the eve of a naval war; and all this she might do for the sake of a pretender without troops, like the Elector of Bavaria, and in concert with a faithless ally like the invader of Silesia. This line of action would strangely combine every

kind of wrong with every sort of danger, and unite imprudence to perfidy. Nevertheless, this third course was, after due reflection, adopted by France.

The main cause of this error, whose consequences remain to this day, was the abiding influence of the memory of the long struggle that had been carried on between the Houses of France and Austria for centuries. In this also lies the sole excuse for those who committed the fault. To abase the House of Austria had been a principal political aim of the sovereigns of France, and it was abetted by every minister who possessed his master's confidence, from the time of Francis I. to that of Louis XIV. Illustrious generals had shed their blood on the field of battle in furtherance of that great design. The memory of Richelieu, Mazarin, Condé, Turenne, and Villars was venerated by their countrymen because of the blows they had struck at the preponderance of the House of Austria. To break with a tradition in which they had been nurtured, and with which all those who spoke or fought in the name of France, from the ambassador down to the least of the diplomatic agents, from the general at the head of his army to the humblest engineer employed in fortifying a citadel, were, so to speak, inoculated, would have been a difficult, if not an unintelligible attempt at any time. But at a moment when, by an unhoped-for chance, a crushing

blow might be dealt to the hereditary enemy, the King of France would appear to be resisting the call of Providence, and insulting the ashes of his ancestors, by stretching out a helping hand to that enemy.

Even the wise reasoned after this fashion, making but one mistake—they failed to reflect that precisely because that policy had filled two centuries with glorious action, it had attained its end, and fulfilled its time. The truest homage, in reality, that could have been rendered by Louis XV. to his predecessors would have been to acknowledge (as history ought to acknowledge at the present day) that they had so successfully advanced their claims against Austria, that, their task being accomplished, it was neither necessary nor even prudent to push those claims any further. One backward glance towards the past was sufficient to show that everything had been accomplished, that there remained nothing for which to labour. What an extent of territory had been gained from the time of Francis I. to that of Louis XV.! What distances had been traversed! How much greatness had been acquired! Immortal honour is the meed of the royal house to which the unparalleled progress of those long years is due; and posterity, still preserving the mutilated remains of that inheritance, after all our misfortunes, owes deep gratitude to the Bourbon kings.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century,

Charles V. was Emperor of Germany, King of Spain, and master of Italy and the Low Countries ; as if by the stroke of a magician's wand, he had become the possessor of apparently inexhaustible riches and limitless territory beyond the seas. It was the empire of the world that had to be wrested from the new Cæsar. One nation only, France, I might almost say one single family, had taken in hand the cause of the independence of nations, and she had proved equal to the task. One hundred years later, thanks to France and her rulers, the phantom of universal monarchy had disappeared, but a menacing reality was still in existence. The House of Austria, enfeebled and severed without being destroyed, divided into two branches springing from one stem, still held France, on north, east, and south, in a formidable grip. With Flanders, Alsatia, Franche-Comté, and Navarre in the occupation of her troops, and her squadrons cruising in the Mediterranean, she had easy access to our territory in every direction, across an unguarded frontier, or by an open coast. It was then that Richelieu boldly flung the French army into all the hazards of the Thirty Years' War; and thenceforward a series of victories had loosened, one by one, every link of that iron chain. Rocroi, Senef, and Fleurus, had successively brought about the cession of Cambrai, Besançon, and Strasburg. The pride of Louis XIV., severely punished by the misfortunes of his old

age, had temporarily endangered, though it had not destroyed these results, and finally, after some reverses—the just chastisement of our own errors—fortune had returned to our side, and Denain had securely fixed the crowns of Spain and Sicily on the head of a Bourbon.

The horizon had cleared on all sides, and Louis XV. was enjoying perfect security at Versailles. Had he been indeed worthy to reap the fruits of that far-sighted policy, he would have contented himself with enjoying them, or at any rate in striving to complete, he would have been careful not to jeopardize it. He would have recognized in the treaty of 1738 a striking proof of the changes that had been effected in the relative strength of the two rival kingdoms. Far from despising the paternal counsels of Charles VI., who appealed on his death-bed to the guarantees given by France as the supreme hope of his race, he would have received them with pride and cordiality. And in fact, could Louis XIV. himself, amid all his splendour, have seen a prouder vision than that of the great-niece of Charles V. becoming the ward of his grandson, and asking only that the balance of power, established by the Treaties of Westphalia and Utrecht, should be maintained, the first of those diplomatic achievements having inaugurated, and the other crowned his reign?

From this point of view, the Pragmatic Sanction,

which guaranteed the territorial *status quo* of Europe, far from destroying or endangering the results of our old policy, was a confirmation, nay, almost a definitive sanction of it. But this truth was not rightly estimated, perhaps not even perceived by Louis XV. and his Council; at any rate, it was not set forth with the authority that the course of events enables us to ascribe to it. There was, indeed, a debate between Fleury and his colleagues, but it did not touch upon this important point. Fleury, who was desirous above all things to preserve peace, and to let events take their course, advanced shabby considerations of economy, the straits of the treasury, aggravated by bad seasons in recent years, the disorganization of the army, which had not yet recovered from the losses of the last war, and the general exhaustion of the country.

Amelot, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Maurepas, Minister of Marine, who were both in favour of a more active policy, met his arguments by others that were equally feeble—drawn from traditions they had failed to understand, and from inapplicable precedents—reasons that suggest themselves to shallow minds, unable to travel out of the beaten track. It is impossible to say which of those two equally blind forces, inertia or routine, would have prevailed, if a more energetic and what I may call a more youthful influence, had not intervened. At all times, and in public affairs as in private

life, youth has delighted in frustrating the calculations of experience. Old politicians are too apt to disregard this somewhat ill-regulated force. Even in our large democracies, the instincts and desires of each new generation periodically disturb the social body, and operate, like yeast, in the fermentation of the masses. But it was quite another thing in the narrow circle of Versailles. In the small space where, within a few square yards, the destiny of a great people was decided, every action multiplied itself a hundred-fold. There the young, restless, idle nobility of France lived, talked, and passed their days, meddling with everything precisely because they had nothing to do, in a spirit all the more critical in proportion to their lack of reflection, and with all the opportunities of gaining the ear of their master afforded by the king's *petits levers* and *petits couchers*, by royal Masses and royal hunting parties, Court journeys, and parties of pleasure and devotion. The stern glance of Louis XIV. would have restrained, but the easy carelessness of Louis XV. encouraged them. There was nothing to moderate their impetuosity, or to check their loquacity: both the actions and the words of the ministers were judged at their tribunal, and the ceaseless buzzing they kept up must have been distracting. From the first, the young nobility of the Court were clamorous for an attack upon enfeebled Austria, and, lest so good an opportunity of making

war should be let slip, they loudly demanded an immediate beginning of hostilities.

These doughty champions were not actuated solely by the spirit of adventure and love of renown natural to all who don the sword for the first time; they were also eager because the last war, although honourable to France, had done little for aspirant heroes.

Owing to a peculiarity sufficiently explained by the age of the prime minister, all the commands in that campaign had been reserved for elderly generals, who had served in the wars of the previous reign. Villars, the most illustrious of them all, had actually died in harness of old age, envying the fate of his comrade, Berwick, who was carried off by a bullet at the same time, but who was over sixty years old. Noailles, Broglie, and Coigny, who succeeded them, were hardly less advanced in life. But in Fleury's eyes, these were young men, he had known them from their birth, he had seen them grow up, and to him (I have observed this delusion on the part of illustrious old men) any man under fifty was a boy. Therefore, it was not surprising that a new military race should have risen up behind these veterans, a race of soldiers eager to enter on the scene, and to win, by a war of their own making, a meed of fame that should be all their own. They were the more anxious to go down into the arena, because they hoped, this time, to rouse

the King from his torpor, and carry him with them on the path of victory.

It was full time, no doubt, for in that censorious atmosphere it was whispered that the King, now in the very prime of life, had not hitherto seemed anxious to imitate his ancestors by taking a personal share in military operations, either by commanding like Henri IV., sharing their dangers like Louis XIII., or even inspecting them from a distance like Louis XIV. Not on the banks of a river that his troops had crossed was Louis detained by his royal greatness, but in the heart of Versailles, far from even the echoes of battle, and that without even the affectation of regret. As no suspicion could attach to the courage of a Bourbon, the King's singular conduct was attributed to the habits in which he was educated, to the care, I might almost say the worship, of his royal person to which his estimable, but obsequious preceptors at first, and afterwards the consort with whom an unequal marriage had united him in his early youth, had accustomed him. The excellent Maria Leczinska, dazzled by her unhoped-for greatness, scarcely dared to lift her eyes to her bridegroom's face, but regarded him as a god who was never to be troubled about anything: constantly dreading that she might lose him, and with him lose everything, she would hardly let him out of her sight. How could she, brought up at a distance from royal rank

(it was asked), have breathed, absorbed, and made her own, those noble inspirations that are the birthright of royalty?

Those numerous courtiers who piqued themselves on being more susceptible on the point of honour than scrupulous in morals, were delighted to observe that the influence of the Queen, which had been very great during the first years of her married life, had, after a gradual decline, at last ceased to exist. The disproportion of age which became more apparent every day, the premature fading of the few charms with which the poor princess was endowed, had gradually alienated the King from conjugal ties that had always been rather irksome. When the estrangement became manifest, the intelligence was received with joy by a number of people of that class who regard the vices of the great as a mine of wealth.

Great ladies of easy virtue, young nobles who were past-masters in the arts of profligacy, were ready to minister to the King's pleasures. A regular conspiracy to withdraw him from domestic life was organized, and all the Memoirs of the day affirm—and the charge has never been contradicted—that the old Cardinal connived at this; either because, as a prudent guardian, he feared to weary his charge by over strictness, or because he suspected that Maria Leczinska still regretted his predecessor, the Duc de Bourbon to whom she owed her elevation

to the throne. The Court and the city soon learned that Louis XV. had all the weaknesses of Henri IV., and there were many who took this to mean that he also possessed the courage and genius of his great ancestor. The notion that there is a necessary relation between gallantry and valour has always been current in the world as well as in books. There existed then a complete collection of what Boileau calls "*les lieux communs de morale lubrique*," and it included drinking-songs in honour of Le Vert Galant, as well as operatic inanities about the loves of Mars and Venus. Had not Molière said,—

> Et je ne conçois pas que, sans être amoureux,
> Un jeune prince soit et grand et généreux ?

Many men of our own day might compose couplets to the same air upon this subject if the style were not out of fashion. At Versailles every one sang these songs; and we ourselves have known ladies of the old Court, who, having led irreproachable lives that ended in saintly death-beds, yet had good store of those gay and warlike ditties in their memory, and have been heard to speak with something more than indulgence of the doings of the valiant youth of their own young days. In short, the King had no sooner emancipated himself from his wife and his confessor, than it was considered that he was on the high road to military fame.

A slight impetus only was needed, and those who

had initiated him into a life of pleasure, were the very persons to inspire him with a desire to fight. Two women presided over the circle of the new royal intimacies; they were sisters, and belonged to the De Nesle family which was noble, but impoverished. One of these, Madame de Mailly, was the first whom the King had publicly honoured with his favour; the other, Madame de Vintimille, was less beautiful, but more attractive than her elder sister, and was generally accused of trying to supplant her. The two ladies, however, lived together in uninterrupted harmony, and entered with zest into the warlike plans of the bellicose young courtiers. The traditions of poetry and romance authorized them to assume beforehand a share in the future exploits of the sovereign. Was it not Agnes Sorel who roused Charles VII. from his apathy, and saved France from ruin? Did not Gabrielle receive the tender farewells of the hero of Coutras? Could it be forgotten that La Vallière and Montespan were majestically conducted across the Flemish plains within view of the besieged or conquered citadels, and afterwards brought back to queen it at the festivals of victory?

> Dansant, avec Louis, sous des berceaux de fleurs,
> Et du Rhin subjugué couronnant les vainqueurs.

Why should not those brilliant days return? Was the young Louis less brave or less handsome than his grandfather? Was he less likely

to conquer and to be loved? What charm to win all hearts would he lack when his features, now too coldly regular, should be animated by the passions of love and fame?

Just as people were talking in this way, it became known that the new King of Prussia, only two years younger than the King of France, had no sooner been crowned than he had flown to arms, without saying, or perhaps even knowing, why he did so. The influence of reminiscences, aided by emulation of such an example, then seemed quite irresistible; but nobody thought the Cardinal could be brought under such an influence. Between the old pedagogue who had the ear of the King all day, and the new advisers whose young faces awaited him at the haunts of pleasure in the evening, there was a still greater incompatibility of temper than of age and profession. Besides, how could any one seriously propose to an old man on the brink of the grave to attempt a great enterprise? It was, therefore, settled among the advocates of war that an end must be put to the senile rule which had lasted only too long, and that if age was deaf to the voice of passing events, means must be adopted to make that voice heard. One of those sayings in which the French excel, which reveal a situation and give the death-blow to an individual, which every one repeats, and each believes himself to have invented, was current at Versailles. "It was a Cardinal," they

said, "who killed the House of Austria; another Cardinal, if he were allowed, would bring it to life again." As for Fleury's successor, it was added, the King would merely have the trouble of choosing him. If he wished for an experienced minister and thorough politician, he had only to recall the Marquis de Chauvelin, a man formerly employed by Fleury himself as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and whom his jealous colleague had dismissed, in order that he might not share the credit of the recent negotiations. If the King preferred a man of action as well as experience, one as fit to be a general-in-chief as a prime minister, and capable of both conceiving and executing great designs, there was one name on every tongue, that of Charles Louis Fouquet, Count de Belle-Isle.

The Count, although he was the idol of the youth of France, was not a young man. He was born in 1684, and was now fifty-six years of age. But while his retirement had retarded his good fortune, it had kept fresh the charm of hope and the prestige of the unknown up to the mature period that precedes decline. In his life, and in his nature, there was something adventurous that contrasted with the monotony of the habits of Versailles. Beheld afar off, in the distance, his image is almost the only one that stands out from the uniform background of the political society of the time.

We seek in vain for personal individuality in that

society, oppressed by absolute power. The heavy hand of Louis XIV. had fashioned France in such sort that any man who aspired to rise, knew beforehand how he must mould his character, and in what path he must walk. Each one belonged by birth either to a brave and frivolous nobility, who purchased their different grades in the army early, and canvassed for places at Court in the interval between two campaigns, or else to an upper *bourgeoisie* which controlled all the civil offices, and had its assigned place in all the councils. The man who entered on either career, followed it from stage to stage without interruption, save such as might be due to a freak of favour, or a bullet on the field of battle. Adversity had thrown Belle-Isle out of these beaten tracks. His father was the third son of the celebrated Fouquet, and the only one who left children. His mother was a daughter of the noble family of Lévis. Notwithstanding this distinguished alliance, all the family of Fouquet had shared the disgrace of its founder, and the heir of the proscribed race was born in obscurity, almost in poverty. His ambition was fired by the recollection of fallen greatness. While all around reminded him that his grandfather had once had the disposal of the wealth of the State, ruffled the King's pride, and interested France in his ruin after having menaced her with civil war, to himself no career was open, for himself there was no hope.

The army, to which his taste inclined, was closed to him: the King had several times erased his name from the list of applicants.

At length, by dint of the persevering entreaties of his mother's relations, he obtained an inferior post; and then he had to gain each step of promotion, sword in hand. It required an almost mortal wound, which he received at Lille, to make him a brigadier: "A tremendous stride," says St. Simon, "from his point of departure." Even after this exploit he was hardly admitted at court, and Madame de Maintenon, who was secretly his friend, always refused to receive him. The death of Louis XIV. reopened Versailles to him, but he required all the address, all the boldness, and all the quick wit of a parvenu to resume his rank there. He even courted the patronage of the worthless Dubois, in order that he might share his elevation.

"He would pass through any door," says St. Simon, and indeed he was a strange medley of various qualities, in which the traces of his mixed origin might be recognized. A fearless knight, an accomplished courtier, finding favour with women by his graceful and insinuating manners, he was, at the same time, an indefatigable worker and writer in office affairs, and he had some of the hereditary talent for finance. He exchanged poverty for wealth in a few years, by means of sound speculations. One of the wisest of these was the exchange of his marquisate of Belle-Isle (the sole

remnant of the paternal fortune), for the countships of Gisors and Vernon. He cleverly persuaded the Council of Regency that the acquisition of Belle-Isle-en-Mer was important for the safety of the coast of Brittany, and he obtained two fine estates, situated in the richest plains of Normandy, which had never hitherto been out of the tenure of the crown, in exchange for a poor domain far away on the sea coast, and worth only a few thousand crowns.

He was less successful in some transactions of a dubious nature in connexion with army contracts, in which Le Blanc, Secretary of State, and La Jonchère, Military Treasurer, were also involved. He was stopped short in this operation by the sudden death of the Regent and the ruin of his associates, and through the agency of Madame de Prie he was accused of peculation, and imprisoned. But so many people, and especially so many great ladies, interceded for him, that he was speedily set at liberty. In a word, true Fouquet that he was, he knew the power of money in affairs of gallantry as well as in politics, and combined the art of acquiring it with that of expending it well. When he kept great state at the Chateau of Bizy, exercising on the banks of the Seine seignorial rights which up to that time had belonged exclusively to the King, receiving news from the Court every day in notes written by a feminine hand, he was the true heir of that magnificent host who received his royal guest

at Vaux, of Fouquet, the famous financier, *who had never met the woman who could resist him.*

We learn from the memoirs of the day, that in the present case he sent 200,000 francs to Madame de Vintimille, in order that his name might be discreetly whispered into the King's ear. Although this is stated in plain words by President Hénault, one of his best friends, I question whether Belle-Isle, who was a shrewd calculator, went to this unnecessary expense. The moment a question of fighting in Germany arose, he was indicated at once; there was no occasion for any one to call attention to him. Every one knew that, after the death of the Marshal, Belle-Isle, who had fought by Berwick's side in the last campaign, and commanded a division of the army of the Rhine, had drawn up the plan of a boldly aggressive campaign, which was to be pushed forward into Saxony, and even into Bohemia, and that he was soliciting the leadership of it when the peace put an end to military operations. Thenceforward he had held himself in readiness to resume his interrupted project at a moment's notice, and, in order that he might be prepared, he had obtained the government of Metz, then, alas! the head of one of the defensive lines of France against Germany, and one of the natural attacking points. From Metz he watched everything that was taking place on either side of the Rhine, and kept up relations with the minor potentates to whom this part of the

country belonged. He was on intimate terms with the Elector of Bavaria, and claimed relationship with him through his wife, Mademoiselle de Béthune, who was descended, like the reigning family at Munich, from one of the Electoral Kings of Poland. On these grounds he corresponded regularly with the Elector, who had confided his griefs to him when France gave her adhesion to the Pragmatic Sanction, and on the death of Charles VI. it was to Bizy that the future claimant turned, to secure favourable consideration at Versailles.

It was natural that Belle-Isle should be called upon to represent the policy which he had persistently urged. The popular belief that he was the only man capable of achieving the great design which he had conceived, was, however, the chief reason why all eyes were turned towards him. The undoubting confidence that he expressed charmed a generation which had already become somewhat effete, and was glad to be encouraged to think well of itself. He had also the instinctive taste for grandeur which never fails to please the people. He liked grandeur in outward show, as well as in reality; he desired it for France as much as for himself; his private ambition was always combined with what was called in the patriotic language of the day, "zeal for the king's glory." Experience only could prove whether his genius would rise to the height of his designs,

whether he had not (as it had been said of him) more fire than force. But in the meantime, if there was to be fighting, all those who were eager to distinguish themselves in the field and beat the enemy desired to do so under the command of Belle-Isle.

## II.

Fleury, finding the storm rising, had two courses before him, either of which would have saved the honour of his name: he could either yield or resist. If he believed resistance to be for the public good, his ascendency over his former pupil was still so strong that he might have silenced the clamour by an emphatic word which would in reality have chimed in with the royal inclinations. If he had regarded the general impulse as irresistible, he might have resigned office, and left to others the charge of conducting a campaign, whose termination (had he approved of it) he could not reasonably have expected to see. At ninety-two it was surely time for a statesman to retire from affairs, and for a priest to think of his salvation.

But age, which increases weakness, does not uproot egotism. Fleury had not the courage of either resistance or sacrifice, nor had he even the merit of yielding with a good grace. Like most men when their hand is forced, he did things by halves. The enemies of Austria demanded not only

that her hereditary States should be dismembered, but also that the Imperial crown should be taken from her. Fleury thought he could aid the former enterprise while only indirectly favouring the latter; that he might recognize Maria Theresa as Queen of Hungary and Bohemia on the one hand, while, on the other, he assisted to raise the Elector of Bavaria to the Imperial throne. If, as it was probable, the newly-elected sovereign should afterwards quarrel with his former competitor, and complicate the general confusion caused by the King of Prussia's having taken up arms, a new order of things would arise, and France might then consider what part it would suit her to take. It would be the crowning stroke of skill in this clever expedient to entrust the execution of it to Belle-Isle himself, who should be sent as ambassador to the Diet of Frankfort. A career would thus be opened to that restless personage, without the notion of changing the hands that guided his policy at Versailles being suggested to the King. This calculation looked very sound: by granting one of the concessions demanded of him, Fleury hoped to get rid of the other at half-price, and by doing business with one of the expectant successors, to dispose of the second. But everybody was not so prudent or so old as himself, and he had reckoned without Belle-Isle and without Frederick.

Early in December, Belle-Isle was summoned

from Bizy, where he had been for some weeks anxiously watching the course of events. He arrived, better informed than he wished to appear with respect to a project that only partially realized his hopes, and he entered the Cardinal's cabinet almost at the moment when the latter received the news of the advance of the Prussian army and the offer of a defensive alliance, which was transmitted by Valori and Beauvau.

The aged minister was thoughtful and care-worn. The urgent necessity of forming a decision, which had come upon him so much sooner than he had anticipated, upset his plans. "It was easy to see," says Belle-Isle himself (in his still unpublished Memoirs), "that he was much embarrassed. He was really distressed by an event that obliged him to carry out a project which had been the dream of his predecessors for a hundred years, an opportunity they would have seized upon with as much eagerness as he evinced repugnance." In the coaxing and plaintive voice with which he usually charmed his hearers, he began: "My first idea," he frankly said, "was to do nothing, and I wanted the King to be simply a spectator of the drama about to be performed in Germany. His Majesty now possesses Lorraine. He does not want to extend his frontier, and it would not be for the good of the kingdom to embark in a war which may be a long one. I have been reflecting ever since

upon the matter: I have discussed it fully with the ministers only, and sometimes with them in the King's presence. They do not agree with me, but in deference to their opinions it has been unanimously decided that we ought not to suffer the Imperial Crown to remain in the House of Austria by permitting it to be given to the Grand Duke, because he would add his own enmity to us and his fixed determination to enter Lorraine to the resuscitation of the House of Austria. . . . But though this resolution has been taken, I am none the less embarrassed. . . ." He then spoke at length of the danger of the enterprise, and especially of any alliance with the King of Prussia. "What a character!" said he. "What he is doing in Silesia cannot be excused: there is nothing to justify it. How can any confidence be placed in such a man! He makes all sorts of advances, and plies me with flatteries, but those false caresses only put me upon my guard. And what motive can be alleged for casting aside the obligations of the Pragmatic Sanction?" Then, the astute old man, sighing deeply, entreated Belle-Isle (as if asking a personal favour), to assist him by going to Frankfort, and making himself the advocate of this ill-defined policy, adding that the King would give him the strongest mark of confidence by making him sole plenipotentiary. Such a proceeding was, in fact, contrary to precedent, the custom was to send a practised diplomatist to counterbalance

the inexperience of a noble who was charged with a special mission.[2] Belle-Isle, flattered by this offer,

[2] The still unpublished Memoirs of Belle-Isle, in five quarto volumes, are to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale. They contain, in general, a classified extract from the Marshal's correspondence either with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or the Minister of War, and few facts not already related in those collections are to be found in them. It is only during the (generally brief) periods when the Marshal had left the army or his diplomatic post to return to Versailles, that we come upon information not contained in the various correspondences. The first pages, in which he records the commencement of his relations with Cardinal Fleury, are almost the only ones of special interest fo rmy purpose. In referring to them here, I have abstained from repeating some assertions which are too plainly contradicted by the facts.

Thus the Marshal affirms that his first conversation with the Cardinal took place on the 19th of November, 1740, and that it was followed by a second a few days later, in the beginning of December, and in each of these interviews Fleury speaks of the aggression of the King of Prussia in Silesia, the offers of alliance made to him by that sovereign, and the answer which he had already made. The invasion of Silesia by Frederick did not take place until the middle of December, and on the 19th of November such an event was quite unforeseen. The proposal of alliance made to Valori dates from the 10th December, and could not have been known at Versailles before the middle of that month. It was only replied to on the 5th of January, 1741. Fleury also speaks of flattering letters received from the King of Prussia: now, in the collection of Frederick's letters, the first addressed to the Cardinal on the subject of the invasion of Silesia bears date the 5th January.

It is clear that Belle-Isle, writing long afterwards, is mistaken in his dates. Perhaps, too, he may have arranged the sequence of facts so as to do away with the impression of his having been the first to suggest an enterprise which had not realized the hopes of the country. His whole narrative, in fact, seems intended to prove that the expedition was decided upon and the affair arranged, before he was made a party to it, and that he had only advised upon the method of carrying it out successfully.

and determined not to let it slip, was nevertheless disturbed, and almost disgusted, at the painful indecision revealed by all the Cardinal said. He did not, however, allow himself to be disconcerted by this, but adopted the tone of a strong man dealing with a weak one. He spoke contemptuously of respect for the obligations of the Pragmatic Sanction, as an absurd scruple. The King, he said, could neither infringe rights which were not his own, nor could he break his often-plighted word to a faithful friend and kinsman like the Elector of Bavaria. Still more easily did he dispose of the Cardinal's cunningly-devised plan of sustaining one of the claims of the Elector without supporting him in the other, the only one, indeed, which was well-founded and practical. The Imperial dignity did not confer any effective power, as it was easy to demonstrate, and could only be sought for itself. It increased the prestige of a powerful sovereign like the Archduke of Austria; it would be only a paltry ornament on the brow of a petty prince, not so powerful as several among his own vassals. An Emperor must, under pain of being ridiculous, be a real sovereign, with an army and territories proportioned to his rank. What would be the use, in any case, Belle Isle asked, of remaining neutral, and merely looking on? Vienna and Munich would be equally indignant with the King, and his enemies, seeing that he was served by ministers unworthy of his an-

cestors, would abandon him to side with his adversaries. The King of Prussia, left to his own devices, would accommodate himself at our expense. "You remove my scruples," replied the Cardinal; "but what can we do? You do not propose to send an army forthwith into Germany?" "I see no other mode of proceeding," answered Belle-Isle, "and if my opinion goes for anything, our troops should immediately be augmented. In the mood in which the King of Prussia seems to be, I do not believe he will be contented with promises unaccompanied by the means of executing them." [3]

The Cardinal, still hoping to escape, timidly advanced the idea that it might be enough, at all events in the beginning, to give a subsidy to the Elector, to enable him to place his troops on a war-footing. But the fiery Belle-Isle robbed him of even that consolation. "I could not," he says, "restrain my feelings, and I reproached him very strongly, though perhaps imprudently, with doing everything by halves.... I added everything that was

[3] Here we must record another instance of the inaccuracy of these Memoirs. Belle-Isle supposes that at this period the King of Prussia asked that French troops should be sent to Germany as a pledge of the projected alliance. This is a chronological error; the first proposal sent through Valori contained no demand of the kind. In that one proposal, on the contrary, Frederick encouraged the cardinal's love of peace by leaving him to hope that he would only have to intervene as mediator between the combatants. It was later, and after he had gained a first step, that Frederick, as we shall see, exacted the second.

to be said on the subject, and that without sparing him in the least. Perhaps the Cardinal repented at the moment that he had entrusted me with the affair; however, he showed no displeasure. He told me to go and see M. Amelot, and to discuss all the details of my embassy with him."

Belle-Isle took care to strike before the iron, which he already considered hardly hot enough, had time to cool. He passed the whole night in making notes of everything needful for a regular campaign, arms, commissariat, equipment, and stores of all kinds. This meant war with its formidable apparatus. Going back the next day to Fleury, he mercilessly read aloud to him the whole of his nocturnal lucubrations. At each paragraph of this overwhelming document, the poor frightened minister would utter a cry of dismay; but to every exclamation Belle-Isle contemptuously replied, "Would you rather do nothing? Well, then, keep to the Pragmatic Sanction, and have nothing to do with the King of Prussia." Then the Cardinal bent his head resignedly, and sighed.

"The number of details to which he found he must attend," says Belle-Isle, "astonished him; and if I have anything to reproach myself with, it is that, seeing how much beyond the scope of his genius, and his character, a project so lofty and so extensive was, I should have undertaken to execute it, and not have foreseen that what I should

obtain by force, so to speak, and by my presence, would either not be put into execution at all, or would be only half done, always feebly, and too late, as experience afterwards taught me.. But the object was so essential and so pressing, it so greatly concerned the King's fame and the good of the State, that I thought it my duty to pass over all considerations that were personal to myself, in the belief that inaction would be the worst of evils."

Urged by two equally impatient personages, Frederick, who was expecting an answer, and Belle-Isle, who was dictating it, the Cardinal gave way, and the offer of Prussia was accepted; but as if to mark the concession, which had been forced from him, with an impress all his own, the old minister indulged himself with the satisfaction of drawing up, with his own hand, a careful note which was to form the subject of Valori's conversation, and in which he answered, word for word, and almost sally for sally, everything the King of Prussia had conveyed to him. This note is a kind of *procès-verbal* drawn up in two columns; the utterances of the King of Prussia on one side, and the Cardinal's replies on the other. It shows us two rulers, as different as they are unequal, in a keen encounter of wits; each trying to deceive the other.

Frederick had said, "Does the Cardinal really wish to have me? I must know at once." The

Cardinal answers, "Yes, yes, immediately. My vote at the Diet is still to be had. The King bespeaks it, and offers his Majesty's invitation to proceed with a treaty of alliance, as earnest in advance." "When Austria and myself have squabbled a little," Frederick had said, "the Cardinal can intervene as moderator. Is not that a character to his liking?" Answer: "The Cardinal confesses his liking for the part assigned to him by the King of Prussia, but his Majesty must acknowledge that, in order to perform it worthily, his Eminence ought to have had to pronounce a judgment that would not leave the heart and mind of all Europe and Germany envenomed against France."

The dialogue ends by the following interchange of cutting speeches. Frederick: "It is a mistake to suppose that all it can take place without drawing the sword." The Cardinal: "The King's minister admits that it would be difficult." Frederick: "It is for the young people to open the ball." The Cardinal: "That is true; but as the ball is principally for them, they must not, after having enjoyed themselves, leave others to finish the fête, and exposed to the reproaches of those who have to pay the piper."[4]

[4] This document is to be found among the Prussian official correspondence, without a date, but between the 13th December, 1740, and the 1st of January following.

The very natural, and as we shall see, well-founded fear of being left alone in the dance, and having to pay the piper, is more politely expressed in the official letter, by which Amelot transmits the assent to the proposal for a treaty of alliance to Berlin. "His Majesty," says the minister, "wishes very sincerely, for the prince's interest, that his undertaking may succeed, and for his reputation, that he may speedily find means of justifying it. More suspicious courts than our own would hesitate to speak out. . . . The sending of so considerable a person as Count Gotter to Vienna, might seem to indicate a double negotiation. It is publicly said at that Court that the minister offered to enter into all the Grand Duke's views without exception, if he would acknowledge the rights of the King his master over Silesia. But his Majesty does not believe any of these rumours. He has full confidence in the King of Prussia, and he gives him a conclusive proof of this in offering him an immediate alliance."[5]

Then followed a project of alliance drawn up in several articles, by which the two sovereigns bound themselves to consult together, and to act in the most perfect unison in order to place that princely candidate, who should be the fittest to maintain the rights and prerogatives of the Princes of the Empire,

[5] Amelot to Valori, January 5, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

on the imperial throne. In pursuance whereof, his Most Christian Majesty would not oppose the King of Prussia in his using *whatsoever rights he might have over the whole or a part of Silesia*, on condition, however, that the King on his side should offer *no obstacle* to a *just satisfaction of any rights which the House of Bavaria might also have over the Austrian states.*

Nothing was said, as yet, about troops, or of an armed intervention. Although the consequence was evident, and the promise therefore implied, Fleury hesitated to put it in words. Every word, indeed, seemed to be forced from him. At that very time, when answering the Elector of Bavaria, who complained of poverty, and begged for an immediate subsidy, he did not hesitate to excuse the parsimony of his first advance by alleging that, in consequence of two bad harvests, which had necessitated the distribution of very large alms, the French treasury was in straits. "I am making a confession to your Electoral Highness," he says, begging him to keep it secret, for the sake of the King's honour. "The King could not give you a greater mark of confidence than such an avowal." [6]

If Fleury expected to avoid a distinct engagement by means of these undignified subterfuges and awkward excuses, and to secure a way of escape

[6] Fleury to the Elector of Bavaria, December 17, 1740. (*Correspondance de Bavière.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

from the dilemma, he was very much mistaken, and did not understand the kind of man with whom he had to deal. The very fact of the French policy having allowed itself—I will not say to take a part in—but even to express a desire in the affairs of Germany, gave Frederick an advantage which his bold and calculating ambition had, perhaps, foreseen, and which, at any rate, he was not a man to use by halves. Only yesterday he was but an adventurer under the ban of the whole diplomatic society. The mere appearance of France on German territory offered him an important, perhaps a decisive, part to play in a great European conflict.

It was to be expected, of course, that the claim of France to dispose of the Imperial Crown, in favour of one of her clients, would not be regarded with indifference by any European power. This claim, which meant no less than the modification of all the conditions of the balance of power recognized by the Treaty of Westphalia, and re-established by the Treaty of Utrecht in her own favour, must of course arouse on every side those rivalries which the coaxing and time-serving policy of Fleury had lulled to sleep for the moment. England, in particular, could not allow the House of Austria, her most faithful ally in still recent contests, to be stripped of her crown. The countrymen of Marlborough could not remain insensible to the fate of the heirs of Prince Eugene, and English inter-

vention was the more readily foreseen because, as I said before, a hostile feeling was spreading, if not between the two cabinets, at least between the English and French people, and their respective navies. The war already declared with Spain might at any moment extend into France, and shots had already been exchanged between cruisers on the high seas either by accident or design. The interest of England manifestly required, that either to sustain this quarrel or to avert it, she should seize upon the opportunity of arousing all the military and moral force of Germany against the ambition of France so imprudently offered to her. That coalition of power and enmity, under which the pride of Louis XIV. had bent for a moment, might again be formed, and since the grandson also claimed supremacy, the time was coming when the same resistance with which his grandfather had been met, must be organized against him.

But to realize such a design, one preliminary was indispensable: Austria and Prussia must be reconciled, that they might be united in the common effort. The re-establishment of peace between Frederick and Maria Theresa was, therefore, rendered of the utmost importance to Great Britain by the action of France, and almost a condition of the salvation of Europe. Frederick might count on having, in the English ambassador at Vienna, an agent almost as eager as his own to

gain the concessions which he demanded for him, and to allay the internal disturbances of the Germanic body at any cost.

Thus his double-faced policy received the reward, not indeed of its good faith, but of its perfidious adroitness; and it was precisely for the act of aggression, at which all Europe was indignant, that he was about to be courted by those very persons who had at first made the loudest outcry; for those 60,000 men, encamped in the centre of Silesia, became the winning card that each one wanted to have in his own hand, or at all events to withdraw from that of his adversary. From Versailles he was bidden to expect military assistance for the completion of his conquest; London was about to mediate so as to secure its confirmation. To lend an attentive ear to both negotiators, the pacific and the warlike; to let them go on bidding against each other; and, at the latest possible moment, to decide for that one who offered the greatest advantage at the smallest price, was the course adopted by Frederick. This was suspected by his contemporaries, but it is revealed to us in the newly published correspondence with a frankness for which we really ought to be grateful. The whole plan is plainly laid out in the letters written by Frederick himself in the early part of 1741. These letters are dated from the different parts of Silesia to which he removed his head-

quarters, from day to day, for the subjugation of the province was rapidly achieved, the Austrian troops, too feeble to attempt resistance, having retired into the fortresses, and Breslau, the capital, having surrendered on the sole condition that the Prussian troops were not to enter, and that the administration of the town was to remain in the hands of the municipality. The decisive struggle was thus put off until the weather should permit the Imperial troops, strengthened by reinforcements and put into good condition, to attempt offensive operations. Frederick had, therefore, some weeks before him, in which to bring all his diplomatic resources to bear, and he proceeded to do so, without losing a moment.

Being informed of the disposition of Versailles, he wrote with his own hand to Fleury: "I am touched, my dear Cardinal, by your assurances of friendship, and I shall ever respond to them with equal sincerity. It only depends upon yourself to render the bonds which unite us indissoluble, by acknowledging the justice of my claim upon Silesia. That I did not, in the first instance, communicate my intentions to you arose from forgetfulness more than from any other reason; every one has not his mind so disengaged as yours is while at work, and it is only Cardinal Fleury who can think of, and provide for everything." Giving his letter to Valori himself to be forwarded, he added, "I desire nothing more

than to ally myself closely with his Most Christian Majesty, whose interests will always be dear to me, and I venture to hope that he will not care less for mine."[1]

But he made no difficulty of writing with the same hand, and perhaps with the same pen, to the King of England: "Sire and Brother,—I am delighted to perceive that I was not mistaken in the confidence I placed in your Majesty. Not being in alliance with any one, I could not speak openly to any, but seeing the good intentions of your Majesty, I look upon you as being already my ally, and as one from whom I ought to have no secrets. . . Far from wishing to disturb Europe, I ask for nothing but that regard should be had to the justice of my indisputable rights. I rely firmly upon the friendship of your Majesty, and the common interests of the Protestant princes, which demand the support of those who are oppressed for the sake of religion. The tyrannical government, under which the Silesians have groaned, is frightful, and the barbarity of the Catholics towards them is inexpressible. If these Protestants should lose me, there is no help for them. If your Majesty wishes inviolably to attach to himself a faithful and staunch ally, this is the moment to do so; our interests, our religion, our very blood is the same, and it would be a sad thing

[1] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 170, 171. Frederick to Cardinal Fleury and Valori, January 5, 1741.

were we to run counter to each other, while it would be still more grievous to oblige me to co-operate in the great designs of France, which, however, I have no intention of doing, unless I should be forced."[8]

Afterwards, speaking openly to his minister Podewils, he explains to him without the slightest embarrassment, the alternative which he means to keep open to himself. On the 14th of January (five days after the letter to Fleury), he says: "I have always looked upon the alliance with France as a *pis-aller*, so that we must do everything to gain possession of a good slice of Silesia through the mediation of England and Russia. But in case these two Courts, instead of lending themselves to this, openly take the part of Vienna, there will be nothing for it but to throw ourselves into the arms of France, and thus to force the hand of destiny." And according as things looked fair or dark, at one point or the other of the political horizon, the minister receives contradictory instructions by turns, which he has to reconcile as best he may. "The part we must take will be to patch up matters with France, and tune our flutes with hers, for England will never help us." Or, "Amuse France as long as possible, until we see a little more clearly whether we shall be able to gain our ends by means of a mediation."[9]

[8] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 185, 186. Frederick to the King of England, January 30, 1741.

[9] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. pp. 172, 179, 181. Frederick to Podewils, the 5th, 11th, and 20th of January, 1741.

The English Government, pressed in this way to intervene, decided to come forward, not by directly offering its mediation, but by suggesting, through Sir Thomas Robinson, its minister at Vienna, an arrangement likely to satisfy the desires of one party, and to spare the feelings of the other. The proposed arrangement was that Frederick should offer Maria Theresa a loan of 2,000,000 crowns for the immediate necessities of the Empire, a part of Silesia being left as a mortgage in the hands of Prussia. Of course, it was understood that the mortgage would never be redeemed, the repayment of the debt was neither to be asked nor effected. In this way the principle of the indivisibility of the Austrian dominions would be maintained, the Pragmatic Sanction respected, at least in appearance, and no troublesome precedent, which might afterwards be taken advantage of by other claimants, created.

While this proposal was being discussed at Vienna, Frederick, having established his troops in their winter quarters, was obliged to return to Berlin for a short time, in the beginning of February. Valori, with his project of an alliance in his pocket, was awaiting him there, very impatiently. It had, indeed, been difficult to prevent him from rushing off to the camp to see the King. Frederick, although he would most likely have been glad to defer the interview for some days longer, availed himself of it for the purpose of advancing one step further with

France. This, considering the inevitable delay in receiving fresh instructions, was another method of gaining time.

Great was the surprise of Valori on being admitted to Frederick's presence, to hear nothing more of the *rôle* of "pacific moderator" which was to suit the ecclesiastical character of the Cardinal so well, but, on the contrary, to find the defensive project which he brought, treated, not merely as a worthless document, but as rather injurious than useful to Prussian interests.

"But, sir," said Frederick, after he had glanced at the document, "what advantage shall I derive from that? I do not see what assistance the King your master will give me in the event of my being attacked by the powers that surround me, and which, at the very mention of France, are ready to rise, not merely against her, but against her allies. For, do not deceive yourself, the only objection which the German princes have to the Elector of Bavaria is his connexion with France. I do not ask better than to ally myself with the King your master, but the kind of assistance I am to expect from him must be put in writing. Will the King put the Elector of Bavaria in a position to sustain his pretensions otherwise than in writing? If the Elector of Cologne and the Elector Palatine are attacked by Hanover, will they be given 30,000 men? And what diversion will the King make? Will he favour the

designs of Spain (in Italy) by means of his troops? Unless all these measures are well considered, and firmly adopted, must I not turn to another side in my own interest? Will the King refuse to me the possession of Lower Silesia, including Breslau?"

Valori, who was hardly allowed to put in a word, contrived to say that all this was very different language from what he had heard before. "Oh! sir," answered Frederick, "everything is much changed; Denmark fails us, the English party now prevails in that Court. In a word, if, as I believe, it is to the interest of France to abase the House of Austria, she has but one thing to do, namely, to act as I have suggested." And as he spoke, he threw the paper containing the project on the table, as if he did not care about keeping it. Annoyed at this, Valori stretched out his hand, as if to put it into his pocket. "Leave it with me," said the King; "I wish to examine it; it is an important document; I must sleep upon it."[1]

The succeeding interviews were very similar, save for certain bursts of confidence, whose effusive friendliness was too evidently the result of calculation to deceive the envoy.

Thus, when Valori, who tried to make the best of his position, told Frederick, rather persistently, that before asking for ostensible support in Silesia, he

[1] Valori to Amelot, 31st January, and 4th February, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

must exhibit some titles, which the King would be quite ready to examine. "But, sir," answered Frederick, "my titles are all extremely good, and if I have not spoken out clearly, it is because, as I am awaiting a reply from Vienna, I have reserved my strongest arguments for the last." "I asked him," says Valori, "whether his arguments were not the thirty twenty-four-pounders and fifteen mortars that were outside his arsenal quite ready for the road." He laughed, and said that "Indeed they would be more persuasive than any others." On another occasion he cried out, as if struck by a sudden thought: "Well, sir, let us agree to a treaty; let us give Bohemia to the Elector of Bavaria, he is so worthy a prince, and so much attached to France! . . . Now tell me, like an honest man, what you augur of the intentions of your government. Does it not know that I am its natural ally in Germany?"[2] Lastly, Valori having told him that Belle-Isle wished to come to an understanding with him before proceeding to the Diet of Frankfort: "Let him come," said Frederick; "besides the pleasure I shall have in making his acquaintance, there will be something piquant in seeing a French general in a Prussian army in the centre of Silesia."[3]

It is not surprising that the bewildered diplomatist,

[2] Valori to Amelot, 4th, 11th, 18th of February, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[3] Ibid., 11th February, 1741.

not knowing what to make of the king's purpose, which seemed by turns to conceal and to reveal itself, should have added some melancholy reflections, when transmitting this bantering invitation to Belle-Isle: "The King of Prussia does not answer as he ought to do; I am for turning to the other side, and no longer being the dupe of a prince who opens negotiations everywhere, and thinks he can work miracles by coming to conclusions nowhere. . . . As I can speak quite plainly to you, sir, I am not afraid to say that levity, pride, and presumption form the basis of his character, and you may pity me for having to steer clear through all this."[4]

But it was too late; Belle-Isle, as well as Fleury, was caught in the toils, and they could no longer set themselves free. By return of post, Valori received orders to give way to Frederick in everything; the promise of supporting the Elector of Bavaria *in other ways as well as on paper*, the concession of Lower Silesia, everything, was agreed to without difficulty. "When the King," said the ministerial despatch, not without a ring of melancholy in it, "proposed an alliance, he knew what would be its consequence." The only condition, and it was one which had been already offered and accepted, was that Prussia should renounce her right to the duchies of Jülich and Berg, a stipulation abso-

[4] Valori to Belle-Isle, 7th February, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

lutely necessary in order to obtain the vote of the Elector Palatine at the Diet. But these conditions, compromising as they were already, were made with so little confidence, that Valori was desired to leave no trace of them in writing in the hands of a prince who might, it was fairly suspected, make a bad use of them.[5]

Nothing could be better calculated to make Frederick feel his own strength, and the need France had of his assistance, and it was even doubtful whether all this weakness would attain its end. I do not, indeed, know what would have happened, if at the same moment the English envoy had been enabled to announce that the offer of mediation had been accepted by Austria. The most determined player hesitates about doubling his stake when he has the offer of pocketing twice the value of his first venture without farther risk. But—shall we say fortunately or unfortunately?—nothing of the kind occurred. For, while Versailles was so yielding, Vienna was inflexible. Neither openly, nor in an underhand manner, would Austria consent for a moment to discuss the alienation of an inch of Austrian territory, either by sale or loan. "Money had never been offered," was disdainfully replied, "to those who do not ask for it." The English minister, who, without directly putting himself forward, remained

[5] Amelot to Valori, 21st and 22nd February, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

behind the scenes, and as it were at the door of the Conference-Room, communicated this resolution with some impatience, and said that better things might have been hoped for, since both Zinzendorf and the Grand Duke showed signs of vacillation, and that a coalition against France would have been very agreeable to the latter especially. But he could not fail to know whence the refusal emanated, and that every failure was due to the staunchness of a great heart. It was the Queen who arrested the confession of wavering on every lip.

There was in the very form of the refusal something ironical, wounding, and impolitic, certain touches less forcible than bitter, which betrayed the hand of an offended woman. Robinson relates that while they were negotiating at Vienna, the Queen of Hungary made it known at Berlin, through the Archbishop of Mayence, that she was ready to forgive everything, provided her pardon were asked, and Bartenstein, the minister who was known to be in her confidence, went about saying that to try to bring the King of Prussia to reason, without punishing him, was as futile as the attempt to wash a blackamoor white.

For some time it might have seemed that this firmness came from a delusion rather than from courage, and had its root in a blind and puerile belief in the succour of France, and in fact old Bartenstein,

with whom the treaty of 1738 originated, and who negotiated all the guarantees of the Pragmatic Sanction, could hardly believe in the destruction of his handiwork. "He is French to the point of folly,"[6] said Robinson, out of all patience. By degrees, however, the news of the nomination of Belle-Isle, and of the current of public opinion at Versailles rendered further incredulity impossible. So early as the 10th of January, Wagner, the Austrian Chargé-d'affaires at Paris, writes, that having pressed Fleury to induce Louis XV. to send the answer—which was still delayed by a point of etiquette—to the Queen, he could only obtain from him an evasive reply, broken by sighs: "If you knew how overpowered I am," the Cardinal said, "and what my position is, you would pity me. I am, as the Scripture says, *in medio pravæ et perversæ nationis.*" The answer arrived, however, and even with the royal title as its superscription, which caused great joy at first. But it was soon discovered that this piece of politeness meant nothing, since Fleury's policy consisted in not appearing to meddle with the dispute about the Austrian succession, while reserving the intervention and hostility of France for the meeting of the Electoral Diet.

The Queen, who was naturally uneasy, was resolved to make the Cardinal explain himself, by appealing to his weak point, that is to say, she

[6] Räumer, *Beiträge zur neuen Geschichte*, t. ii. p. 105 and following. D'Arneth, vol. i, pp. 128 and 131.

addressed effusive and almost affectionate letters to him such as a daughter might write to a father, or a pious soul to her spiritual director, a few lines of each being always written by her own hand.

Now begins a courteous, and almost affectionate correspondence between the old priest and the young woman, the one using every feminine device to obtain a word that might raise her hopes or terminate her suspense, and the other employing all the niceties of priestly and diplomatic language to avoid revealing his mind or pledging himself to anything. The Queen strikes every chord in succession; she speaks by turns of her horror of the perfidy of Frederick, and of the King's honour, pledged by the guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction and the cession of Lorraine. She implores the Cardinal, in the name of conjugal affection and the good of the Church, whose interest lies in the union of the two great Catholic Powers and the continuance of the Imperial crown in the "apostolic" family. To all this, the Cardinal makes one answer, and it means nothing: The projects of the King of Prussia, he says, although no doubt reprehensible, were known prior to their execution, and as the Queen took no precautions to oppose them, it was naturally supposed that she regarded them without alarm. Since that time friendly powers had offered their mediation, and the result must be awaited.

"I feel," he said, "to its full extent, your Majesty's kindness. I wish your Majesty all the prosperity which those great and amiable qualities that are recognized and admired by all who have the happiness to approach your royal person deserve. I understand the weighty reasons which make your Majesty desire that your dear husband, his Serene Highness the Grand Duke, should possess the Imperial crown. But your Majesty must permit me to represent, that not only has the King no right of suffrage at the coming election of an Emperor, but also that the affairs of Germany are so embroiled that it appears very difficult, not to say impossible, to foresee with any certainty the interest which each power may have in the matter. Your Majesty has powerful friends in the Diet, but they are not equally our friends, and do not wish us much good. It is more necessary for us to defend ourselves from harm than to seek for what may be most pleasing to us, and your Majesty is too just to blame us for acting in self-defence!"

He speaks in the same equivocal tone about the Pragmatic Sanction. The King is faithful to his promises, but how could he sacrifice the rights of others? As for the exchange of Lorraine for Tuscany, that matter was treated of directly between the Grand Duke and the deceased Emperor.

"It may readily be believed," says the Cardinal, "that it gave the Prince, your dear husband, much

pain to surrender the inheritance of his fathers, but, even if that were so, he has been well compensated by the happiness of possessing your Majesty." [7]

Short of being spoken to deaf ears, these utterances could not fail to be comprehended. The Queen therefore, while she continued to ask the meaning of answers whose very ambiguity was significant, made every effort to rouse the indignation of all Europe against her perfidious adversary. She addressed letter after letter, protestation after protestation, to every Court which had guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction, to all the representatives of the German princes sitting at the Diet of Ratisbon, and to all the presidents of the military and judicial circles of the Empire. Although couched in the usual forms of the Aulic Chancery, these documents bear an impress of originality; a tone of generosity that breaks through their pedantic construction breathes in them. One feels sure that the Queen's own hand has been at work on them, and the Latin language (which she spoke with ease) does not impede the expression of strong personal feeling. Under the cloak, she says, of amicable assurances, the most hostile demands have been concealed. The past has never seen, and the future never will see, anything like this.

[7] D'Arneth, t. i. p. 389. Maria Theresa to Fleury.—Fleury to Maria Theresa, 26th February, 26th March, 10th April, 1741. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

While an Austrian envoy was still at Berlin, the King of Prussia, under the cover of peaceful appearances, invaded foreign soil, and disturbed the peace of a friendly province. Hence it may be seen what kind of fate is in store for princes if such conduct be not punished by a united effort on their part. It is not a question of Austria alone, but of the whole Empire, of all Europe. All the princes of Christendom are concerned in not allowing the most sacred links that unite human society to be broken. . . . All of them should make common cause with the Queen, and furnish her with the means of averting so great a danger from them. As for her Majesty, she will fearlessly use all the strength God has given her in withstanding the common enemy, and for this service rendered to the common weal, will ask no reward, save the reparation of the damage sustained by her States, and whatever may be needful to secure them from similar attempts in the future.[8]

These energetic steps taken in all directions, the sight of courage so high contending with injustice so great, aroused the public conscience. The movements of popular opinion were much slower than they are in our day, its intelligence was much less rapid, and it had at first allowed itself to be deceived by the artful manœuvres of Frederick; but while the Cabinets were showing weakness and hesitation,

[8] D'Arneth, t. i. pp. 123, 124.

it began to be aroused. In London, at the Hague, wherever freedom of speech and of the press existed, pamphlets, in ardent defence of persecuted innocence, and of the threatened liberty of Europe, were circulated. The same sentiments were expressed in the English Parliament, where Sir Robert Walpole, whose popularity was now on the decline, was strongly urged by the Opposition to offer Maria Theresa more efficient assistance than that of mediation. The rural population of Silesia (who bore an hereditary attachment to the House of Austria) having recovered from the first shock of amazement, and suffering from the evils inseparable from an invasion, began to bestir themselves in secret, and forming armed bands, harassed the rear of the Prussian army. In the tumultuous Diets of Poland, the Catholic nobility loudly expressed their indignation that a neighbouring province, professing the true faith, should fall into the hands of a Protestant prince, and it was evident that strong pressure was about to be put upon the weak sovereign, Augustus III., so that both Dresden and Warsaw might be induced to take up arms in favour of Austria. The danger became really serious when, towards the end of February, a palace revolution whose nature will be sufficiently explained by the sequel, seemed likely to give force to the same influence at St. Petersburg. Frederick had then to fear being taken in the rear,

and surrounded by a coalition of enemies before he had had time to conclude either of the alliances which he had artfully postponed in order to get as much as possible out of them. "Pandora's box is open," exclaimed poor Podewils in despair; "every misfortune is coming out of it at once."

While he did not deceive himself as to the magnitude of the danger, Frederick took care not to show the slightest alarm. On the contrary, he breasted the storm, neglecting nothing that might beguile the newly-awakened public. He returned hastily to the army, made an entry into Breslau, gave solemn audiences there, heard the complaints of the inhabitants, answered them with compliments, and gave entertainments, to which he invited the wives of the citizens, without distinction of religion, just as a legitimate sovereign might have done in his own capital. He brought his non-military friends, savants, and men of letters, such as Jordan his librarian, and Maupertuis the mathematician, from Berlin, to take part in these ceremonies, and rallied them pitilessly about their dislike to the unaccustomed sound of arms. A well-organized correspondence immediately communicated to Europe, and especially to Paris, that he was most enthusiastically received everywhere. Voltaire (who got all the news direct) did not fail to spread it, in the form of clever verses, which easily caught the memory. He asks Kayserling, the chamberlain,

in a rhyming letter, which was assuredly not intended for one person only,—

Aimable adjutant d'un grand roi,
Et du Dieu de la poésie,
Sur mon héros instruissez moi.
Que fait-il dans la Silésie ?
Il fait tout : il se fait aimer.
* * * * *
Sitôt que Frédéric parut
Dans la Silésie étonnée,
Vers lui, tout un peuple accourut
En bénissant sa destinée.
Il prit les filles par la main,
Il caressa le citadin,
Il flatta la sottise altière
De celui que, dans sa chaumière,
Se dit issu de Witikind.
Aux huguenots il fit accroire
Qu'il était bon luthérien ;
Au papiste, à l'ignatien,
Il dit, qu'un jour il pourrait bien
Lui faire en secret quelque bien,
Et croire même au purgatoire.
Il dit, et chaque citoyen
À sa santé s'en alla boire
Ils criaient tous à haute voix,
"Vivons et buvons sous ses lois." [9]

And as this idyl might perchance be contradicted by certain murderous practices, to which parties of Prussians, who ventured to cross the mountains without an escort daily fell victims—Frederick himself having narrowly escaped several times—it was an understood thing that all peasants

[9] Correspondance de Voltaire.—Voltaire to Frederick, 28th January, 1741.

who took up arms in defence of their country were simply spies and assassins in the pay of Austria. Frederick even stated seriously that one of them, who had been arrested and questioned, had confessed that he had sworn to the Grand Duke himself, in presence of the Aulic Council, to assassinate the King of Prussia. No one gave the slightest credence to this ridiculous calumny, but it formed a sufficient pretext for striking salutary terror into the people by punishing with the utmost severity all who made the slightest show of resistance. Lastly, to show that he was afraid of nobody, Frederick arrested Cardinal Zinzendorf, Archbishop of Breslau, brother of the Prime Minister of Maria Theresa, in his own palace, and threw him into prison upon the pretext that he was in communication with his former masters.[1]

He dealt, however, less contemptuously with these attacks in his confidential letters. This one, written to Podewils at that very time, betrays excitement which could only have been caused by the sense of imminent danger. "*Cara anima mia, non desperar.* . . . Let us overcome these difficulties, and we shall triumph. There are no laurels for the slothful; Fame bestows them on the most intrepid and the most laborious. By the way, I have twice escaped the Austrian hussars. If I should have

[1] Droysen, vol. i. pp. 216, 217. D'Arneth, t. i. pp. 155, 384, 385.

the misfortune to be taken alive, I command you solemnly, and you will answer to me for it with your life, that in my absence you will not respect my orders, that you will act as adviser to my brother, and that the State shall purchase my liberty by no unworthy means. On the contrary, under such circumstances, I desire and command that action should be more vigorous than ever. I am King only while at liberty. If I am killed, I wish my body to be burned in the Roman fashion, and my ashes to be placed in an urn at Rheinsberg. In that case, Knobelsdorf must make me a monument like that of Horace at Tusculum." [2]

To these heroic precautions was added another which was more cheerful, and meant to provide for a less fatal eventuality. The minister of France received an intimation that he might come to the camp to inform the King of the decision taken by his Court. At last, Frederick had to make a choice, and it appeared that the time for resorting to the *pis-aller* was come.[3]

Valori did not need to be told twice; he arrived without delay at the King's headquarters at Schweinitz, and for once found every door open to him. He had no sooner explained the new offers that he was authorized to make than Frederick,

[2] "Pol. Corr." t. i. pp. 201, 202.—Frederick to Podewils, 4th and 5th March, 1741.

[3] Ibid. t. i. p. 203.—Frederick to Valori, 11th March, 1741.

almost throwing himself into his arms, and hardly allowing him to finish, said: "How graciously the King sets about doing me a pleasure! He may depend upon finding a grateful ally in me. The English have got allies, but it is always with their eternal talk about the ambition of France and her wish to domineer over Europe, and who, I ask you, wants to domineer more than they do, or does so in a more haughty manner? . . . At least it may be said that if France has any such design, she uses less disagreeable means to compass it." Then passing at once to the plans in question: "So soon," said he, "as I am made aware of the King's intentions in favour of the Elector of Bavaria, we shall only need to take a map, and trace with a pencil upon it what he would like to have, and I answer for it, almost with my life, that he shall have it." But though he was ready to set to work at once, he insisted none the less upon the necessity of keeping the alliance secret, that he might have time for his preparations. Valori agreed with him, as this would probably suit the Cardinal's timid method of proceeding, and he offered (it is his own expression) to "play a part," and leave the camp with the scowl of a discontented man who has not been able to get what he came for. "Ah! do that," cried Frederick with delight, "and try to let it reach Brackel" (the Russian Minister).

Then, the better to hide their game, he kept

Valori to dinner, and treated him during the whole of the repast to sneers and jeers at France and the French. The Marquis, who was not very comfortable, thought that the joke was carried rather too far. He answered respectfully, however, that he could not understand why the King should so greatly dislike a nation by whom he was so greatly admired. When they rose from table, Frederick offered him his hand, saying, "There is no ill-will between us, Marquis?" Valori bowed, and retired to write his despatch, in which he carried precaution to the extent of putting all the confidential part of the interview into cipher, while he related the little comedy in which he believed himself the only player, in the ordinary character, and as if it had been serious.[4]

It was in truth a comedy, but was he entirely in the secret of it? Who knows? Did even Frederick know himself? And again, whom did he want to deceive, when a week later, Valori having hardly left him after receiving his repeated assurance that *the business was done*, and he had *no change* to make, he wrote to his minister in London? "Try your best to separate the King of Great Britain from the cabal, and to get him to take up our cause in earnest; our interests cannot be opposed to his. . . . You may protest that my hands are free hitherto, that I have

[4] Valori to Amelot, 18th March, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

not yet concluded any alliance with France, notwithstanding all the advantages offered to me . . . so that it rests with the King to unite with me for our mutual good, for that of Germany, and the Protestant religion. I expect a clear and decisive answer." [5]

Whether it was sincere or not, the consent of Frederick to the proposals of France sufficed to put Belle-Isle, who was only waiting for a signal, in motion. He had not been losing his time any more than Frederick. Never had any one within the memory of minister or general displayed such zeal and activity. He lived between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the War Office, drawing up diplomatic instructions in the morning, and drafting the plans of the campaign in the afternoon, while he kept a crowd of employés at work all night, as well as all day. He had resolved, from the first moment, to conduct both the diplomatic and military operations; he meant to fight, and he meant to negotiate, and the dignity of Marshal, which was conferred upon him with the embassy, showed that Fleury had been induced to accept him in the double capacity. The fact was that the Cardinal, out-manœuvred, in despair, and stunned by all this noisy activity, yielded blindly to his fate, just as a sailor who has lost his reckoning lets go the rudder, and abandons himself to Providence. As for the public, whether

[5] "Pol Corr." vol. i. p. 214.—Frederick to Truchsess, 21st March, 1741.

at Versailles or in Paris, in the cafés or in the salons, they mistook audacity for genius, as they commonly do, and were literally fascinated: "All France, become Belle-Isle," says a manuscript memoir of the time, "has done with doubts," and the Marquis d'Argenson, a sarcastic thinker who did not err on the side of kindliness, recorded the general enthusiasm in his private journal without making an exception of himself. "Every one has remarked for some time past," he says, "how much M. de Belle-Isle has advanced in Court favour. This is because he has made a plan for Germany. He has a good head, and materials from all sides. He eats little, sleeps little, and thinks a great deal, rare qualities in France. With a word he can sway our mediocrities of the ministry."[6]

The general enthusiasm was not justified by events; yet we cannot refuse a certain tribute of astonishment (admiration would be too strong an expression) to the enterprising spirit who dashed into so great an adventure, solely on the strength of popular favour and a consent wrung from a weak government. The boldness of the design lends some merit to the mere fact of its conception, and to the success that for a moment attended it, brief and barren as that success proved.

The Imperial crown having been elective in name only since the rivalry between Francis I. and

[6] Journal de D'Argenson, vol. iii. p. 146.

Charles V., the idea of snatching it from the House of Austria upset all the traditions of the Chanceries, and all the foundations of European public law. It was not to be supposed that such a revolution could be accomplished merely by influencing the choice of the electoral college, a diminutive assembly, without either energy or *esprit-de-corps*, and with a majority composed of puny sovereigns in no condition to face any kind of danger. To do this thing, it would have been necessary to govern all the springs, and change all the pivots of the Holy Empire, the most complicated machine that ever existed, and whose supreme dignity was only an unsteady head ill-adjusted to the body. Moreover, the ambassador of France had to prepare to meet the representatives of all the Courts of Europe face to face in that arena; some accredited like himself to the Electoral Diet, others exerting a preponderating influence on the principal political centres of Germany. He would have either to withstand their opposition or to disarm it by serving their interests. Lastly, as diplomatic accounts are generally settled by force in this world, if Austria were really to be struck to the heart, that heart must be sought on the banks of the Elbe or the Danube, at distances never hitherto reached by the French flag.

Such was the many-sided problem that Belle-Isle proposed to solve single-handed. His voluminous correspondence, which fills several shelves of

the archives at the Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs, is almost entirely in autograph, and is easily recognizable by its nervous and hurried penmanship; —shows that he had studied and considered it under every aspect, and from all points of view. A glance at the various parts of the vast task he proposed to himself, as they passed before his mind's eye, is indispensable to a clear apprehension of its magnitude and complexity.

## III.

I have already explained why it was to be expected that the strongest opposition to the policy of France and to her representative in Germany, would come from England, and, hostility on that side being certain, it would seem a useless waste of time for the ablest negotiator to endeavour to avert it. The effects of that hostility appeared to be all the more imminent, because the King of England himself, as sovereign of Hanover, disposed of one of the nine votes of the electoral college. Singularly enough, however, this very circumstance—the double crown placed by accident on one head—might delay or even paralyse the action of British enmity for a while, without disarming it. The interests of the King of England were not, in fact, identical at all points with those of the Elector of Hanover. The King, as the head of a great nation which was

the rival of France, would naturally support the candidature of Francis of Lorraine; the Elector, on the contrary, belonged by the traditions of his family and his faith to the league of petty Protestant princes of Germany, who were the born enemies of Austrian preponderance.

It seems to us that it would have been impossible to hesitate between two considerations so unequal in importance; nevertheless the contrary is affirmed by all contemporaries. The two first sovereigns of the House of Brunswick, although not indifferent to the splendid inheritance that had devolved upon them through the chances of a revolution, always retained their attachment to the modest patrimony of their ancestors. Their gaze was ever fixed upon the cradle of their greatness, whither they returned, periodically, every year. This narrow point of view turned them away, on several occasions, from their new and more imperative duties. In the present instance, the fear of involving the little Electorate, a flat and open country, just made to be the field of the first battle and the prize of the first victory, laid hold of George II., and dissuaded him from incurring the risks of a continental war. At all events, before he incurred them, he would exhaust every diplomatic means of satisfying or appeasing Prussia, and thus secure the safety of his frontiers against the first shock of war. This hesitation became known

in London, and the Opposition made it a subject of bitter reproach, if not to the King himself, at least to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, who was accused of encouraging the royal weakness in order to retain Court favour, at the expense of the national interest, and contrary to the popular desire.

This was an unfounded charge: Walpole needed no interested motive to make him love peace and fear war; he had only to follow the promptings of his natural disposition. In this respect, as well as in others, he was the Fleury of England. In fact, more than one point of the resemblance that existed between the statesmen at the head of the rival States had kept them on good terms for a long time. Each had governed his respective country for more than twenty years, less by superior ability than by a happy adroitness, and the strength of both lay in their common knowledge of all the weaknesses of the human heart, more alike everywhere than we think, open to the same temptations in a Parliament as in a Court; for whatever the theatre may be, "behind the scenes" is all the same. The old gentleman, although as little militant as the old prelate, was a much less keen diplomatist. Foreign politics bothered him, especially when they disturbed his little parliamentary jobbing at an inopportune moment. "I leave Europe to my brother Horace," he would say; but his distinguished

brother had been ambassador to France for several years, and had formed very pleasant relations there; warlike counsels would certainly not proceed from him. Belle-Isle knew all about these matters better than any one else, and might flatter himself that if he could not win over the English policy to himself, he could be beforehand with it, and attain his goal before any obstacle was put in his way.

The dilatory action of the English Cabinet led to hesitation on the part of another naval power. "Holland," said Frederick, "follows in the wake of England, as a boat follows the man-of-war to which it is attached." It is difficult for us to realize the great importance at this time to all parties, either of obtaining the alliance, or prolonging the neutrality of the little State that now lives in a dignified and prosperous calm, far from the great stage on which the destinies of nations are played out. We have to pause, and remember that the narrow territory, wrested by the indomitable courage of its inhabitants from the ravages of the sea and the cruelties of despotism, had become the solo asylum of social and political liberty in silent and submissive Europe. In Holland, credit and the press, two powers begotten and fed by liberty alone, and which have changed the face of the modern world under our own eyes, were born, and made the first trials of their strength.

The traders of Amsterdam had accumulated such

vast wealth by their wide-spreading commerce, that they were in a condition to sell their co-operation, or to dictate their conditions to needy governments (they were all needy) at a loss for money to pay their armies or to gratify their fancies. Moreover, the Dutch gazettes, being exempt from official censorship, were the only ones which could freely discuss the events of the day. In them, what one hardly dared to say in a whisper was printed, what was hidden elsewhere was revealed, and these deliberate indiscretions were surreptitiously circulated in all the capital cities. Before this, the only tribunal of opinion whose sentence was not dictated beforehand, all the causes of public law were pleaded, every military and political reputation was discussed. No one could despise that voice of the public conscience with impunity. Louis XIV. had learned this to his cost, for nothing had done more harm to himself and his race than the alienation of the sympathy which had been won by the grandson of Henri IV., and was forfeited by a perfidious aggression. Frederick, warned by example, took care to avoid a similar fault. He had entered on a course in which Holland could not follow him, but he neglected no opportunity of giving an underhand kind of assurance that he continued to be attached to Holland as the most devout of his co-religionists, and that it was in reality oppressed Protestantism that he was about to defend upon Austrian territory, nor did he fail

to add that Dutch moneys placed in Silesia would run no risk in his hands. Thus did he strike in turn each chord that vibrated in the hearts of those proud traders, who were equally solicitous for the rights of their conscience and the interest of their capital.

When we pass, without a pause, from the southern frontier of the Empire to its opposite extremity, we find an almost similar medley of states, small and great, all in the same condition of uncertainty, although united in their animosity to French ambition. Russia, that semi-barbarous colossus, whose still mysterious strength a great man had recently revealed to the world, naturally inclined towards Austria. The first steps of the infant Empire had been assisted, and its entry into the European society had been facilitated, by Austria. Quite recently, the two Empires had contended against France in Poland, and deprived the father-in-law of Louis XV. of the electoral crown. Their union was necessary to make head against the constant menace of a revival of the Ottoman power. The youthful ambition of Russia was, on the other hand, traversed by the projects of Prussia, kept in check, and forbidden to turn its eyes towards the west. These natural tendencies of an evident interest might, however, be diverted from its course at any moment by personal influences or passions. In that new world, only just come forth from chaos, and which had beheld a crowned camp-follower suc-

ceed to the throne of Peter the Great, without either resisting or resenting the scandal, nothing was fixed. In a year, from one month to another, a palace revolution might take place, power change hands, and the half-formed plans of alliance be scattered to the wind. The agents of all the Courts, English, French, and German, instructed to be on their guard, were always at work, and ready to lend a hand to these violent proceedings by corruption and intrigue.

Events had succeeded each other with amazing rapidity since the death of the last sovereign, the Empress Anne. Her successor, Ivan, was a child, hardly seven years old; in a few months his personal guardian had been changed twice, and his ministers three times. In November, when the invasion of Silesia took place, the valiant Marshal Munich, governing in the name of a regent whom he had enthroned, was all-powerful, and Frederick, an old friend of his, had been greatly emboldened by the assurances and encouragement he had received from him.

In March, all was changed. Munich, in his turn, had fallen from power, and given place to a successor who was said to be under English influence. On that side everything once more looked badly, at least until a change of scene or of reign took place, which might always be foreseen, and with which active diplomacy might co-operate.

France was in a position to offer her new ally a

guarantee, then held to be sufficient, against this danger which was particularly alarming to Frederick, because it disturbed his frontiers, and endangered his rear. That guarantee was the support of Sweden, a country allied to French policy by ties of friendship dating from Richelieu and Gustavus Adolphus, and maintained by an annual subsidy with which Sweden could hardly have dispensed. In these days we should smile at a policy which reckoned on Sweden for keeping Russia in check; but nations, as we know, live not by realities only, but also, and almost as much, by memory and imagination. The impression left by Gustavus Adolphus, and temporarily revived by the temerity of Charles XII. was not yet effaced.

Thus Sweden shone by reflected light, and imposed upon herself no less than upon Europe, while Russia was not yet fully aware of her own power. Lastly, although fortune had not favoured Sweden of late, and her possessions were already curtailed, she had not yet lost Finland by conquest, and through that ever-open door a Swedish army might be brought almost into view of St. Petersburg, while hardly passing beyond its own territories. A few hours' bombardment would reduce the unfinished monument in stone and marble on which the son of Alexis had left the impress of his genius to dust. Frederick regarded it as an indispensable condition of the maintenance of tranquillity in the north of Germany,

that Sweden should be urged to enter into immediate hostilities with Russia, and he pressed for the fulfilment of this article more than any of the other instructions of the French plenipotentiary. Again, it was not Germany only which had to be considered, for Maria Theresa, Grand Duchess of Tuscany and Duchess of Milan, was not a German princess only, nor was the most coveted, the most precious, and also the most vulnerable portion of her patrimony that which lay beyond the Rhine. At the foot of the Alps, in the rich plains of Lombardy, the French and German armies had, for two centuries, met in deadly encounter, and mingled their blood in the waters of the Po. The scene of so many past contests could not remain unoccupied in the fresh strife. If France, called elsewhere, was not to appear there in person, she must at least take care to be represented by others. In this respect her security might be complete, for Spain was quite ready to fulfil the task, having never renounced that part of the inheritance of Charles V. with a good grace, and the Italian lady who reigned at Madrid was not disposed to let slip so favourable an opportunity of reviving former claims. I will not go so far as Frederick, who—no doubt because he delighted in antithesis—imputed to the ambitious daughter of the Farnese, Spartan pride, English obstinacy, Italian cunning, and French vanity; but it may be admitted, without exaggeration, that the second wife of Philip V. was

endowed with indefatigable activity, which had given Europe a great deal of trouble for thirty years. The aim she pursued unremittingly, and for which she had more than once disturbed the public peace, was the creation of a royal appanage in her own country for each of her children (failing the throne of Spain, whose heir was the son of Philip by his first wife). She had already succeeded on behalf of the eldest son, the Infant Don Carlos, to whom the treaty of 1738 had secured dominion over the southern peninsula, as the kingdom of the Two Sicilies. She wanted to obtain an equal portion of the north for her second son, Philip, at any cost. No sooner was Charles VI. dead than she demanded passage through Rousillon and Provence for a body of troops whom she purposed to send into the Milanese territory. No sooner was Belle-Isle accredited, than she also despatched an ambassador from Spain to the Electoral Diet, with the same rank, quality, and instructions as the French ambassador. The Count de Montijo was instructed to co-operate in all the actions of Belle-Isle, and to attach himself to him so as to secure the largest possible share of the quarry to be hunted down. Far from having to fear any troublesome contradiction from his colleague, Belle-Isle had only to moderate his over-importunate zeal.

Trouble of a different kind was given by another pretender to a share in the Italian possessions of

Austria. The latter was no other than the new King of Sardinia, whose father had until quite recently been Duke of Savoy, but who now wore a crown of brand-new lustre as the recompense of a long course of wary ambition. "My son," said King Victor Amadeus to his heir, when he was dying; "the Milanese is an artichoke which we must eat leaf by leaf." The moment had evidently arrived for supplying meat to an undiminished appetite. The House of Savoy, which had been placed for long years between France and Austria, as if between the anvil and the hammer, had always succeeded in getting profit out of a situation in which others would have found nothing but peril. The House of Savoy had practised the art of selling its assistance to the two belligerents by turns, and after it had been paid by both, getting out of the bargain just in time to avoid being involved in the issue of the conflict. This game had been too profitable to be abandoned, so that from the first day it was equally evident that the Court of Turin was preparing to play a part in the coming events, and impossible to discover what part it intended to play. In vain had Frederick sent Algarotti his confidant to Charles Emmanuel, believing that he, as a compatriot of the king, would be better able than any one else to unravel the threads of Ultramontane finesse. Algarotti did his best, but it was labour lost, and at the end of two months he

wrote, "The mysteries of the Bona Dea were not more hidden from men than is the policy of this Court."[7]

To make the position more critical, it was by no means certain that fortune would dispel the mystery by declaring itself, because the Savoy princes had more than once succeeded in enhancing the value of their services by taking the side of the vanquished, and thus changing the balance of forces. "These princes," said a diplomatist of the period, "are of a blood which never spills itself uselessly: they know that he who would be the most ready to give them the Milanese will always be the one who does not possess it."[8]

The diplomatic field over which Belle-Isle had to cast his eyes was a wide one, the threads which he had to take up were numerous and tangled. So many were the different elements, and so great was the confusion of interests and tendencies, that all depended upon the skill of the hand which had to group them together. According to the greater or less success of the first efforts, a formidable coalition might be organized either against Austria or against France, and yet this was child's play in comparison with the difficulty of giving a common impulse to all the ill-joined and ill-assorted members, whose co-operation was necessary to bring about the least movement of what was

[7] "Pol. Corr." vol. i. p. 198.

[8] M. de Bussy, Minister of France in England.

called "the Germanic body." Let us picture to ourselves, a territory which did not then contain more than twenty-five millions of men, and whose extent was only one-third greater than that of France at the present day, with 300 independent sovereigns, all claiming to reign by an equal title; the two who were on a par with the greatest royalties of Europe, equally with the eighty whose dominions did not cover an area of more than eight or ten square leagues. Let us trace out the strange configuration of these innumerable States upon the map, and observe how they are all entangled together by the various accidents of conquest or succession, the small States dove-tailing into the great, and the various possessions of the same owner situated at the most opposite points of the horizon. Let us try to keep in our head all the denominations of these potentates—electors, kings, dukes, archdukes, counts palatine, bishops, margraves, burgraves, landgraves—a variety of titles which correspond to every political form that a society can assume, from pure monarchy at Vienna and Berlin, to ecclesiastical rule at Mayence and Cologne, and even down to republican liberty in the imperial cities. Then let us study divisibility pushed *ad infinitum* in the interior of these units, which were not even atoms, by the co-existence of 40,000 seignories, and almost as many abbeys, guilds, orders, or chapters, all endowed with immunities, or exercising privileged

jurisdictions, and we shall get a glimpse of the spectacle of incoherence and confusion which was presented by Germany in the eighteenth century, at the moment when national unity was already firmly constituted in France, under the hand of a powerful administration, and freely represented in England by a parliament grouped around a popular throne.

This strange amalgam claimed also to form an organized body endowed with the principal elements that constitute a government. It had a central executive power personified in the Emperor, a legislative power sitting at Ratisbon in an elective Diet. But these institutions, even supposing, which is doubtful, that they ever had serious consistency, were no longer anything more than the ghost of a great memory. For a long time past, as I have already said, the imperial dignity possessed no inherent power, and could only make itself respected by borrowing that of the prince who was invested with it. The jurists still asserted that all authority emanated from the Emperor, as all light comes from the sun, but they did not care to add that, though the orb still shone, its rays had lost their heat and power. In fact the Emperor retained the discretionary use of only two of his inherent faculties; the nomination to certain benefices, and the bestowal of titles of honour. In every other exercise of authority he had to ask the co-operation, and consequently submit to the control, of his powerful subordinates.

In the first place, after his election, and previous to his coronation, he was tendered by his electors the formula of an oath which he was to take: this was drawn up beforehand, in several clauses, which bore the significant name of capitulations. By the first of these engagements he bound himself to do nothing to render the Empire hereditary in his family; he afterwards swore to respect all the rights and privileges of the princes, even those that were most exorbitant. Among the number of these was the right to make treaties, either among themselves, or even with foreign powers, with the sole reservation that nothing was to be stipulated which could imperil the interests of the Empire, a condition as easy to elude, as it was difficult to define. While he was thus constrained to admit an independence on the part of the least of these sovereigns, which was ruinous to his own authority, the Emperor still remained no less bound to support theirs, to assist them to repress the rebellion of their subjects, and to receive neither appeal nor demand against them without giving them notice. I know that it will be said the House of Hapsburg had deliberately broken the first of these promises for two centuries, and habitually violated all the others, but what better proof of the inanity of power could be given than the necessity of abusing it in order to give it weight? This was a phantom to which usurpation only could give a body.

Everything that emanated from this ideal rather

than real dignity, bore the same character of impotence. There was, for instance, an imperial administration. The surface of Germany was divided into ten circles, and at the head of each was a chief, nominated by the Emperor, but this administrative division, which dated back only to the grandfather of Charles V., was open to the objection that it did not usefully correspond to any political division. When the states of the same sovereign were distributed through different circles (and this was ordinarily the case), the prince, subject to several authorities, profited by the fact to obey none. The King of Prussia, for example, belonged to the circle of Upper Saxony as Elector of Brandenburg, to the circle of Lower Saxony as Duke of Magdeburg, and to the circle of Westphalia as Prince of Minden and East Friesland. Each of the Imperial delegates who ought to have had authority over him, found himself a very small personage in the presence of the King of Prussia, and if any of them had taken a high tone with him one day, he would have had to yield on the next, before even the shadow of a threat. On the other hand, the Elector of Bavaria was almost alone in his circle, where he took it very ill that imperious orders from Vienna prevented him from living at his ease, and governing after his own fashion.

There was also an Imperial administration of justice, a high court (*Reichskammergericht*), whose

members were nominated by the different states, and its president was selected by the Emperor. This high court had nominal authority to settle the differences that arose between the various princes, and to receive appeals from the local courts in certain cases, but for want of regular means of procuring the execution of its decrees, this pretended sovereign jurisdiction afforded only a deceptive protection to the weak, whether States or individuals. The slowness of its procedure, the frequently proved inefficacy of its decisions, had long ago discouraged the claimants of justice from having recourse to its intervention, or from aiding in its formation. More than one State neglected to nominate the judges whom it had a right to choose, and more than one also forgot to pay them after they had been nominated, thus leaving them exposed to all the temptations of venality. An Emperor might still, on occasion, find docile and corrupt instruments of despotism in them, but no reliance was to be placed, in matters of general interest or common weal, upon so degraded an authority.

Lastly, there was also an Imperial army, and the Emperor had the right to nominate the commander-in-chief and the general staff. But what an army! In time of peace it consisted of 40,000 men, 28,000 being infantry, and 12,000 being cavalry. This was the maximum on paper In time of war its strength might be raised to 120,000. Historians tell us that, in fact, more

than 20,000 imperial soldiers were never seen in the same camp, or figuring upon the same field of battle. For the honour of the standard of the Holy Empire it was well that the muster of these troops should take place as seldom as possible, for their almost grotesque aspect was singularly expressive of confusion and chaos. Not only each regiment, but each company, was formed of the contingent of several States, and each kept its own uniform and armament. There were States whose entire contingent consisted of two men, equipped at their own expense, but also in their own fashion. The right of the States extended, always in proportion to their means, to the nomination of inferior officers, so that in the same company the captain might be nominated by a king, the first lieutenant by a city, the second by the head of a religious order, or even by an abbess. And then, so that no one should be offended, or discontented, the officers, Protestant and Catholic, were to be of an equal number, and to occupy equivalent ranks. In case of an unforeseen emergency, each prince had to undertake the mobilization of his little troop, and we may imagine how exact must have been the muster at the rendezvous. The payment of the army tax, which was placed to the account of the different States, was equally lax. Contributions to the common treasury came in but slowly, and this latter point had consequences of greater importance than the irregularity of certain

payments, for the sinews of peace, as well as those of war—the means of meeting the cost of the general interest—were wanting. Imperial finances did not exist; each sovereign was supposed to furnish a subscription, but no means of compelling him to pay it were provided, and Kiel and Philipsburg, the two fortresses which guarded the entry to the Empire, were falling into ruins, because, as they belonged to no one, none would furnish annually the few thousand crowns necessary to keep them in a state of repair.

The assembly which met periodically at Ratisbon might have supplied what was wanting to the unity and action of the executive power, if it had been animated by a patriotic instinct, or any care for the common weal. But the Constitution of the Diet did not permit such sentiments either to exist or to show themselves. On the contrary, it seemed to be expressly contrived to keep up the mutual distrust of all the States, small and great, or, if the great came to an understanding, it was that they might oppress and annul the small.

The Diet was divided into three colleges; that of the electors formed by the nine sovereigns to whom the right of appointing to the vacant imperial throne belonged; that of the princes, numbering not less than 100; and, lastly, that of the free towns, composed of fifty-two deputies. The voting was by order, so that the two princely

colleges carried all the resolutions by themselves.

It must be added that powerful electors, like those of Brandenburg, Saxony, and Bavaria, had entered into the college of princes by virtue of sovereignties which they might possess outside of of their electorate, and that in the college they disposed of all the suffrages that they derived from the different principalities. On the other hand, princes whose treasuries were ill supplied, made a common fund for the maintenance of a single representative of them all. Under such conditions as these, debates were mere mummery, except those which might arise between the rival claims of princes really worthy of the name, and the latter generally preferred to settle their difficulties by other than parliamentary methods. The outcome of these discussions being foreseen, none cared to provoke them.

In fact there was only one point on which the division of votes would have been possible, and contest serious; this was religious matters, for the interests of caste or order might then give place to others of a superior kind. But, as this was a real danger, and often experienced, everything was arranged to obviate it. Since the peace of Westphalia, a mode of action in which prudence was carried to excess, had been introduced, in the fear of a renewal of the troubles of the preceding centuries, and the sanguinary strife that had followed them.

"In all matters that touched religion (says a writer to whom we owe the best exposition within my knowledge of the state of Germany in the eighteenth century) the vote by college was suspended, and the two religious parties, the *Corpus Catholicum* and the *Corpus Evangelicum* confronted each other, forming two fully independent corporations, and each armed with an unconditional veto against any resolutions of the Diet which appeared to them incompatible with their religious interests. Upon what it was that constituted a religious matter, each party had to decide, and the necessary result was that things which had nothing whatever to do with religion or its interests were ranged under that heading." [9]

Owing to this curious arrangement, it was not two classes, or two parties, that were face to face, but two churches, or rather two armies, and inaction, the necessary result of this negative equilibrium, was the only means that could be devised for securing the duration of truce, if not of peace.

And so, to the social and political discord by which the Germanic body was rent, there was added religious dissension, so obstinate and so deep, that, at a given day, the Diet, like the army, might be divided into

[9] Bidermann, *Deutschlands politische, materielle und sociale Zustand im Achtzehnten Jahrhundert.* Leipsig, 1854, vol. i. p. 12. In the correspondence of the French envoy (M. de la Noye), to the Diet of Ratisbon in 1738, there is a memorial setting forth, in two columns, the grievances of the Protestants and the grievances of the Catholics, which were discussed by that Diet.

Protestants and Catholics, all ready to fall upon each other. This significant fact I recommend to any historian who desires to examine more closely than I can the real explanation of the state of decadence to which the German Fatherland had allowed itself to be reduced. He will, I am sure, be convinced that it was the acrimony and tenacity of the religious dissensions of the time that condemned Germany to vegetate in a wretched, piecemeal, dead-alive condition, while all around her the other European nationalities were strengthening themselves by a wise and salutary concentration of power. A comparison drawn from our own history throws a remarkable light on this point of view. We, too, like Germany, had had our "wars of religion." Let us suppose that, after the prolonged strife of the sixteenth century, God had not given Henri IV. to France, or had not sent him the aid of our wise, politic magistrates. Let us picture to ourselves, instead of the League and the Reformation both disarmed by him, and living in peace under his tutelary authority, those two factions, half aristocratic and half religious, driven, indeed, to lay down arms at last, through sheer exhaustion, but each remaining in its strong places, and in an attitude of combat. Let us leave Bouillon at Sedan, Rohan at La Rochelle, to face Mayenne, De Nemours or D'Epernon, masters of Bordeaux or Marseilles. Let there be a feeble ruler in Paris, who, instead

of repressing these rebel forces, permits them to organize and constitute themselves, and treats with them himself; what, I ask, would have become of French unity in the face of this reawakening of the feudal, invigorated by the sectarian spirit? What future, what progress would have been reserved to it? What I have put as a supposition for France, was the actual history of Germany. There had been no Henri IV. on the other side of the Rhine, and the Treaty of Westphalia was the opposite of the Edict of Nantes. It was not a social peace that the negotiators of Munster and Osnaburg had so happily established between the church and her adversaries; it was a division of territory whose boundaries they had settled. Is it, then, surprising that the consequences of the two operations should have been as different as their nature?

The principle laid down by the peace of Westphalia, and which still prevailed in the seventeenth century, the maxim *cujus regio, cujus religio*, formulated by the publicists, was calculated to perpetuate dissensions, instead of putting an end to them. This rule of political materialism, which made the possession of the territory the condition of religious liberty, placed the pretensions of the most petty prince under the protection of conscience, and put anarchy under the guard of fanaticism. Any petty sovereign might look upon himself as a champion of the Bible or the Church, hold his puny State as

a Holy Land which he was bound to defend, and thus invest his most foolish prerogatives with the character of sacred inviolability. In defending a musty privilege, or a frivolous form, he might claim to be fighting for his own honour, and for the integrity of his faith. Under cover of the new principle of liberty of conscience, the old system of feudality preserved all its former features.

As the Emperor always was a Catholic, it was especially among the Protestants that an obstinate resistance to the most legitimate exercise of the central authority was organized. This was the result of suspicion, which was both natural and easily justified. Every means of contending against the Emperor in the Empire, even the very privileges that seemed inseparable from the faith they had forsaken, appeared good to the Protestants. The King of Prussia would not have suffered himself to be deprived of a single one of the rights of the Grand Master of the Order of Teutonic Knights. On all sides were to be seen Protestant bishops and clerics, living with their wives and children, in the abbeys, commanderies, and episcopal residences, drawing the revenues, and exercising the jurisdiction of old piously assigned to the Catholic clergy by the devotion of their ancestors. Thus we see how the complex play of human passions disturbs the ideal lines that are complacently laid down by the philosophy of history. The Reformation, whose tem-

pestuous breath had dispersed the traditions of the Middle Ages everywhere else, had preserved in Germany the most antiquated institutions of the past, and, as it were, frozen them into rigid immobility.

Such was the complicated, and at the same time dislocated machine which it was Belle-Isle's task to pull out of the rut, and set going in a fresh direction. Was there, then, in that vast region of Europe, no longer any feeling common to the mass of its inhabitants, which might one day make all hearts beat with patriotic emotion? Alas! an attentive observer, looking closely, might have discovered one such feeling, then latent and in the germ, destined to speedy development. This was not, however, a feeling of the kind to which a French agent could appeal; it was that same sentiment which Frederick discerned with the perspicacity of genius and dislike when he said to the Marquis de Valori, "Take care; the only thing that injures your friend the Elector of Bavaria with the princes of Germany, is his relation with you."

Frederick saw clearly there was one point on which all Germans were agreed, without distinction of the greater or lesser States, of Protestant or Catholic, one common feeling that could impose silence on their special dissensions; this was sullen and jealous irritation with France. Hence, it was not very difficult to foresee that, if it were skilfully handled,

this impatience of the great Power beyond the Rhine might unite them all, sooner or later, in one common action. To tell the plain, unvarnished truth, history will pronounce on the evidence, which has only recently become available, that the unneighbourly spirit of Germany was, to a certain extent at least, justified by facts.

It is most unjust to assert, as almost all German historians of the present day do assert, that the internal weakness of the Empire was due to the premeditated and treacherous action of French policy, in sowing discord and disorder everywhere in its course; but it is only fair to admit that France had profited by the internal conflicts of Germany, at first wisely and modestly, but afterwards with imprudent presumption. And we should be careful to distinguish between the two phases, in each of which the conduct of the French Cabinets was animated by a very different spirit. Engaged as they were, for the sake of their own independence, in a necessary struggle against Austrian ambition, the sovereigns of France were justified by the laws of war in stirring up hostility against their hereditary enemies, and creating difficulties for Austria up to the gates of Vienna.

The alliance of Francis I. with the princes leagued against Charles V., the assistance afforded by Richelieu to the Protestants against the armies of Wallenstein and Tilly in the ensuing

century, were acts of legitimate defence; equally legitimate were the precautions taken by the negotiators of Munster and Osnaburg against the forming of a preponderating force, upon a frontier so ill defended by nature as that of France on the north and east. But while he extended the protection of French interests even beyond the Rhine, Richelieu, in his intervention in German affairs, never failed to maintain that characteristic moderation which, combined with promptitude in action, was a distinctive mark of his genius. While he supported the Protestants, he offended neither the dignity nor the conscience of the Catholics. He was always careful to avoid a tone of haughty patronage towards those to whom he lent the aid of men or money; he never allowed one of those expressions of disdainful kindness that turn a service into an insult to escape his lips. The consequence was, that when France had been placed, by the peace of Westphalia, in the first rank among the Powers by whom the Germanic liberties were guaranteed, that testimony of gratitude by those whom she had served, was regarded by those with whom she had fought as an act of justice.

Far different was the attitude taken by Louis XIV. during his reign of fifty years. On this point, as well as on so many others, it seems to have been the destiny of the son of Louis XIII. to injure and deteriorate the inheritance left to him by his father's

ministers. The truth is, Richelieu and Mazarin strove for one single object, while Louis XIV. aimed at effect, and rated the éclat of victory as high as its advantage. Germany had been the greatest sufferer by his pompous vanity. During half a century Louis XIV. had sent his army so many times across the Rhine needlessly and without a pretext, had made his friends pay so dearly for his alliance, and his enemies feel his power so keenly, had carved the records of his exploits on so many triumphal arches, and had wounded the *amour-propre* that never sleeps, so long and so deeply, that at length patriotism awoke from its slumber. There are, besides, certain faults which Providence punishes by denying them oblivion. The soldiers of Turenne little knew to what an undying hatred on the part of Germany they devoted the very name of their country, when they inscribed it in letters of blood and fire on all the hills of the Palatinate.

And yet the harm would have been but half done, if the sole responsibility of all this violence and maladroitness had rested on the King or his generals only. It has, however, unfortunately been the invariable habit of the French public to follow the worst examples set them by their leaders, and the fashion of assuming a haughty and contemptuous tone towards and concerning our northern neighbours spread rapidly from the Court downwards; it

was adopted at Paris as well as at Versailles; the nobility, the *bourgeoisie*, and men of letters, all took part in this charitable pastime. Did a German prince or his German envoy make his appearance in the Œil de Bœuf, the dandified courtiers would vie with each other who should be the first to amuse the fair ladies of the choicest circles with accounts of his absurd costume or his starched manner; the depth of his prescribed bows, and the clumsiness of his accent. The gentlemen who had done their campaigning in Germany had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about the "gothic" manners of the petty Courts, their ridiculous etiquette, and their interminable repasts, beginning with gluttony and ending in dead-drunkenness. The learned declared that it was impossible to find one's way through the labyrinth of Germanic law; the writers, justly proud of the lucidity of the French language, described the German tongue, of whose wealth and complexity they knew nothing, as a "patois." A constant fire of quizzing and sneers was kept up. When St. Simon wants to give an idea of the extreme awkwardness and ugliness of a certain princess, he says openly, "She is German in the highest degree." Boileau is indignant that a Teutonic name should be admitted into a line of poetry, and Voltaire himself, in his youthful production, *Le Temple du Goût*, denies access to that shrine to all who have been guilty of going

"to rhyme in Germany." Thus did short-sighted fatuity take pleasure in crushing the country which was already that of Leibnitz, and was destined to give birth to Goethe, under the weight of the superior elegance, politeness, and accomplishments of France.

This was, if not well, endurable, so long as that superiority, manifesting itself on the battle-field by victory, and in letters by genius, was incontestable. Germany submitted sullenly, but without murmuring, not only to the material yoke, but to the moral ascendency of France, and appeared to justify the jesters who mocked her by attempting to imitate them. Those petty princes at whom the Court of France laughed, went home with eyes dazzled by having gazed adoringly upon the sun, and immediately set about playing Louis XIV. on a small scale. The imitation of Versailles is to be seen in all the palaces which they built; for example, Wilhelmshöhe at Cassel, or the former electoral palace at Mannheim. All the young nobles had to make the journey to Paris once, in order to finish their fashionable education. And yet, that ideal of French grace and politeness which they strove so hard to reproduce, was the nightmare as well as the dream of all, and it was equally humiliating to be for ever copying the model, and never attaining to it. Again, the Professors of the French language and manners were

almost all Protestant refugees, banished by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, who had the best reasons in the world for teaching their pupils both to speak the French language, and to think ill of France. Is any further explanation needed of the intensity of a resentment which was smouldering for the moment, but would inevitably blaze up some day, fed as it was continually by fresh provocations? One thing only was wanting to bring about the open manifestation of this sullen enmity—the accession to a German throne of a prince of sufficient stature to look France full in the face. The prince who was to play such a part would have to satisfy conditions not easy to combine. He must, in the first place, be powerful and capable of victory, for strength only can rectify the habits of long continued weakness. But he must be neither a son of Austria, nor a possible pretender to the Holy Empire: the appearance of such a one would only revive the old quarrels. For the same reason he must not be a Catholic, because every Catholic was suspected of being on the imperial side; but he must be a Protestant without being a fanatic, lest he should excite the suspicions of the other camp.

How were these apparently contradictory requisites to be reconciled? Let us, however, suppose that the problem had been solved by a favourite of fortune who combined them all in his own person, and who added to political and military genius, a capa-

city for writing and thinking equal to that of the greatest masters of philosophy and letters. Let us suppose that this gifted prince excelled especially in the terrible art of satire, and exulted in employing it in darting poisoned arrows into the flesh and the hearts of those who had so long used it against his country; let us suppose that, being by turns the faithless ally and the fortunate foe of France, he, during fifty years, made our kings, ministers, generals, and diplomatists, the butt of cynical and biting epigrams, re-echoed throughout Europe; add to this the most unlikely supposition of all, that in his campaign against the honour of France, he had the luck of finding an ally in France herself: that all the literati, all the philosophers of France flocked to his throne to crawl at his feet and live upon his wages; lastly, that he constrained the monarch of French thought, he who has been called the true successor of Louis XIV., Voltaire himself, to come at his call to make rhymes in Germany! What a transformation scene! What a reversal of *rôles!* What a recompense for the wounds inflicted on German pride, and what a balm for the hurts of German vanity! Can it be doubted that a national thrill of homage would salute him who should thus redress a long course of injury, as the precursor of a new Germanic unity?

For the expiation of our faults, and to the great

peril of the future liberty of Europe, this man had been born into the world, and was already preparing for his great fortunes. This was he whom the plenipotentiary of France was about to seek in his camp, that he might clear the way to victory for him. The hour had come; the man was Frederick.

## CHAPTER III.

### BELLE-ISLE AT FREDERICK'S CAMP.

Belle-Isle's entry into Germany—Character of his brother, the Chevalier—Belle-Isle visits the three Bishop-Electors of Trèves, Cologne, and Mayence—Characters of these petty sovereigns, and the parts they played—Belle-Isle goes from Mayence to Dresden—Unfavourable disposition of the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland, towards France—This is opposed by his natural brother, Maurice de Saxe, Lieutenant-General in the service of France—The battle of Mollwitz—Flight, and subsequent victory of Frederick—He detaches himself from the French Alliance, and wishes to make advances to England—Belle-Isle repairs to the Prussian camp—His interviews with the King—He departs without obtaining the immediate conclusion of the treaty of alliance—Fresh proposals are transmitted to Vienna by the English envoy, Lord Hyndford—Maria Theresa rejects them—Frederick makes up his mind to treat with France—The difficulty raised by him to the execution of the treaty.

On the 10th of March, 1741, the ambassador of France to the Electoral Diet passed through Metz, the seat of his former government, on his way to Germany, equipped with great magnificence. Although his suite was composed only of his travelling attendants, and far more splendid preparations were already made for his entry in state into the imperial city on the eve of the election, the

number and style of his carriages, the crowd of secretaries, gentlemen of the embassy, officers of the household, pages, runners, and servants in attendance upon him, indicated an intention of striking the public imagination by a display of power which revealed a great design.

The Marshal presided alone over this diplomatic army, for so it might be called; no colleague had been appointed to act with him. This was a mark of special consideration, such as had not been bestowed even upon the great negotiators of the peace of Westphalia. He had in reality, however, a more useful auxiliary at his side than all the colleagues in the world could have been, in his brother, the Chevalier de Belle-Isle, who never left him. Those who knew the two brothers were aware that from childhood up they had formed but one being, and that each, while he contrasted with, was the complement of the other. The younger was as cold, as reserved, as careful to keep himself in the shade, as the elder was expansive, brilliant, and eager for display; but the Chevalier who was secretly the instigator of the very designs whose mere instrument he appeared to be, brought method, steadiness, and tenacity—all, in fact, that was wanting to the dashing ardour of the Marshal—to their execution. It was familiarly said of the two brothers that they had in them the stuff for one finished statesman; the elder contributing the

genius that imagines, the other the good sense that executes. In reality, the ambition of the one aimed higher, and revealed itself more openly, while that of the other burned with a flameless fire almost as intense, and would have burst out in its turn had it not been restrained by the Chevalier's subordination to the head of his house. This was a usual sentiment of the domestic life of old France, and it elevated the rights of primogeniture into a social institution and the highest expression of family feeling, rather than a personal privilege.

The Marshal and the Chevalier had resolved to visit the members of the august college—those at least with whom they might hope to agree—before the election, for which no date was as yet fixed.

The question was—what were they to say to these personages? In the confidential conversations between the two brothers this matter occupied them constantly, and its interest and import increased in proportion as they neared Germany. They were puzzled to decide on what ground they should on the first day place the negotiation that they were sent to open. The King of France had not disavowed the engagements of the Pragmatic Sanction, and he had recognized the royal title of Maria Theresa. It was out of the question that he should openly support the claims of the Elector of Bavaria upon the Austrian patrimony; nor would it do to pronounce too clearly for his

candidature to the imperial throne, for that would reveal the intention of France to throw her weight into the election, and offend the rival claimants. Still less would it do to make common cause with the King of Prussia, whose violent proceedings were alarming to the timid spirits. The only motive by which the intervention of France in an affair which solely concerned Germany could be justified, the only chord that could be made to vibrate in German hearts, was their interest in the emancipation of the Germanic liberties from the preponderance of the House of Austria by an independent choice, and especially in preventing that usurped power from falling into the hands of a hardly-nationalized foreigner like the husband of Maria Theresa. But, to give some appearance of reality to this disinterested purpose, it was essential to avoid comminatory means of urging it, and especially to prevent the appearance of a French army on German soil from being perceived even on the horizon. How then was the Marshal to make the strength of France felt without proclaiming it beforehand, and how was he to account for using it when its employment should become necessary? The Marshal himself puts this difficulty quaintly enough in a letter to Amelot.

"There is one chief point," he said, "which occupies me as much as you: it is to determine what motive or pretext the King can allege to justify the

entry of our troops into Germany. His Majesty must necessarily have inquired about this of the Elector of Bavaria; there may be several motives, and I will discuss them with the Elector, unless they have been already laid before and agreed to by his Majesty." [1]

Fortunately, the first persons to whom the Marshal had to speak were neither the most difficult to intimidate, nor the least quick to understand the carefully-veiled menace. On his way to Frankfort. Belle-Isle had to pass through the three episcopal electorates on the left bank of the Rhine, Trèves, Cologne, and Mayence. The situation of these odd little sovereignties was a singular one; they formed a strip of peaceful territory between the greater States, which was known by the expressive nickname of "the Priests' Street." Their semi-ecclesiastical character inclined them naturally towards Austria, the representative of the union of the Church and the Empire; but their position as neighbours of France, almost within her borders, condemned them to be used as military routes, and, so to speak, *têtes-de-pont*, in every movement of our troops on the other side of the river. Thus, at the slightest rumour of war preparations at Strasburg or at Metz, the petty sovereigns of these three little States trembled on their miniature thrones, and their

[1] Belle-Isle to Amelot, Mayence, April 17, 1741. (*Correspondance de l'Ambassade près la Diète de Francfort.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

sacerdotal profession enabled them all to yield in advance, without any loss of honour, to the least appearance of force.

It must be admitted that of all the obligations of their state, the duty of Christian submission was the only one which they piqued themselves on observing strictly; for these Prince-Bishops of the eighteenth century, without being saints by any means, were far from resembling the many prelates of the Middle Ages, who were great alike in war and statesmanship. They retained the peaceful disposition of the priest, but no more; nothing could be less austere than their morals and their conduct. There was nothing chivalrous or even manly in the excesses of these younger sons of great houses, who had taken orders for form's sake, and to maintain the dignity of their families, but with no other intention than to substitute the pleasures of idleness and unbecoming luxury for domestic joys and cares. No tie of hereditary affection united those rulers of a day to the quiet, mild, but indifferent population over whom they had been set by the votes of a few Canons. They were released from all the duties, and we might almost say, deprived of all the attributes of royal virility, and they vegetated in a prolonged state of childishness, giving themselves up to the mean influences that beset the egotistical old age of unmarried men.

In the despatches of Marshal Belle-Isle, dated from the little princely-episcopal palaces, we find sketches of "interiors" which turn those documents into *genre* pictures. I am tempted to dwell a little on them, because the digression depicts a way of life, and certain manners and customs, that go far to explain many of the events of the time, and to which nothing now existing bears any resemblance.

The first visit of the ambassador was to the Elector of Trèves at his palace at Coblentz. A special envoy had been sent on in advance to regulate the ceremonial of the reception, Belle-Isle having settled the details beforehand, like a man who knew thoroughly with whom he had to deal. St. Simon himself, strict as were his notions of the etiquette to be exacted from foreign princes, would have found nothing to object to. It was arranged that the Elector was to advance to meet the ambassador at the entrance of his apartment, and, taking the hand which was to be extended to him, lead him to an armchair exactly like his own. At dinner the same equality was to be observed; two similar seats were to be placed side by side on the same line and under a dais of the same size; each of the two personages to be served on gold plate by his own pages, in the same number. If the King had come in person, more could not have been demanded; but the reality of the royal representation was attested far more strongly by the fit of trembling with which

the poor Prince was seized when he found himself face to face with the living image of his formidable neighbour. His face streamed with sweat; he could hardly pronounce his words or finish his sentences. The interview became still more painful when after a few minutes it became evident, and the Elector had to acknowledge, that an infirmity, the result of a wound which had nothing glorious about it (an accident in hunting was the cause) made it indispensable for him, on pain of extreme suffering, to suspend the conversation every few minutes. The Marshal naturally endeavoured to put him at his ease, but his politeness inflicted a good deal of trouble upon him, as he found next day, when they had to talk of business.

The conversation, of course, turned upon the future election, and the Marshal proceeded to demonstrate to the Archbishop how greatly it would be to the interest of an independent prince to escape from the Austrian yoke, and to that of a sovereign whose State was on the banks of the Rhine, to prevent the recurrence of collisions by which his own subjects were the first to suffer. Each time, however, that the discussion, tending to its conclusion, became pressing, the listener had a reason that was no less so for evading the force of the Marshal's reasoning, and the necessity of replying. Then Belle-Isle had to begin all over again. He was not slow to perceive that the Elector's complaint had

another consequence, which was no less laughable, though more grave; it placed scruples of conscience, which he had not expected to meet with, in his way. He had brought with him from Versailles an open credit, to enable him, on occasion, to support his electoral designs by such tangible reasons as usually produced an effect upon petty princes who were always spendthrifts and always needy, and whose ministers were not invariably incorruptible. But when he attempted to enter upon this subject with a Councillor who had been indicated to him as particularly accessible to considerations of the kind, he was immediately checked: "Pray mention nothing of the kind, at least, just now," said the prudent Councillor, "under present circumstances it would be sure to spoil everything. The Elector knows he is ill and has death always before his eyes; he is constantly talking about his conscience, and it is not a pretence. I shall therefore confine myself to telling him that you have not thought it right to make him any offer either for himself or for his family, although you were authorized to do so: this cannot fail to produce a very good effect, because, if his scruples last, the Elector will be pleased by your circumspection; and if, on the contrary, his health is restored, and he acts in accordance with the views of his Majesty, then that will be the time to come forward." "I approved of this line of conduct," wrote Belle-Isle, "and I shall learn at Frankfort, from the

said Coltz (this was the name of the sagacious Councillor) what has passed between him and his master on the subject. Your Eminence will perceive that up to the present time I have pledged myself to nothing in this cause beyond a fat abbey for the suffragan, and a general promise to Coltz, if the Elector gives his vote. The whole will not come to more than 100,000 francs, to be paid after the election is secured by their sovereign's vote. The doctor, and a valet de chambre whom he employs to write private things for him, can be easily and cheaply gained over. The result of all this detail is that the King will not have to disburse much money here before the election."[2]

At Cologne, or rather at Bonn, where the Archbishop-Elector resided, another comedy was acted, with different, but no less amusing incidents. There it looked as if everything would go smoothly, and indeed spontaneously, in the desired direction; for the Elector was the younger brother of the Elector of Bavaria, and would surely lend a hand to the exaltation of his own house. What was the surprise and the annoyance of Belle-Isle to learn on his arrival that, so far from having fraternal co-operation to count on, he had, on the contrary, tumbled into the midst of a family quarrel! The two brothers had quarrelled from their youth up about

[2] Belle-Isle to Amelot, March 19, 22, 1741. (*Correspondance de l'Ambassade à la Diète.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

the division of their mother's diamonds; and besides, when the younger rose to sovereign rank, the elder, although his brother was thenceforth his equal, had affected to regard their former relations as unchanged, and tried to exercise control over him; he had even remonstrated with him upon his choice of his ministers in plain language. The other resisted this very energetically, and from that moment it was enough that any desire should be expressed at Munich, to have it instantly opposed at Cologne. The emancipated ward was naturally not desirous that the guardian whose yoke he congratulated himself upon having shaken off, should be raised to the supreme rank. Austria took clever advantage of this foible, and her ambassador to the Diet, Count Colloredo, who had been beforehand with Belle-Isle at Bonn, had just left that place, taking with him the recognition of the sovereignty of Maria Theresa. Now this, on the part of a cadet of Bavaria, was tantamount to a denial of the claims of his own family. He left the ministers and all those who surrounded the Elector, gained over to Austria beforehand, and, indeed, in her pay.

Count de Sade, the French resident, who had to make head against the storm alone and unaided, bore himself with coolness and address in this difficult position. He was, if we may judge from his correspondence, a clever man, who concealed much astuteness under apparent frankness, and

was endowed with the inexhaustible gaiety which French gentlemen of that period carried into affairs of every kind as they carried it into the battlefield. Finding that the obstacle was not to be taken by assault, he set to work to circumvent it, and leaving to others the care of governing the Prince, he affected to concern himself solely with amusing him. The Elector's ennui was diverted and relieved by the lively conversation, wit, and originality of the Count, who was his constant associate in pleasure, and who even compelled himself to share the official devotions of the Prince so that he might lighten the burden of them.

By degrees, this pleasant companionship grew into confidence and confession, at first relating only to love affairs. The diplomatist, who was very quick to take a hint, and understood a delicate dilemma, made it his business to arrange a series of elegant supper-parties at his own residence, to which a prelate of lax principles might come in an unceremonious manner, and meet the fair ladies of his acquaintance on a footing of familiarity which the decorum of the episcopal palace would not permit. The day after each of these discreet entertainments, the august guest would be entreated—on the plea that such little presents keep up friendship—to accept some artistic or valuable article newly received from France, and which he had condescended to notice.

This comradeship in gallantry led by a smooth

and unremarked process to political confidences. On occasions when the Prince looked pale and had passed a bad night, the Count would arrive full of solicitude respecting his health, and would often have his questions answered with a sigh, and a complaint that public affairs were very troublesome. The Elector even so far forgot himself as to let it be perceived, that although he had to complain of his brother, he felt some remorse at taking advice which was contrary to the interest of his family. He made some singular admissions; he acknowledged that he had been rather too hasty in saluting the Queen of Hungary, but that was because he had formerly been under engagements to the Emperor her father, from whom he had received a gift of one hundred thousand florins, and he was told by his confessor, that he could not retract his word without also making restitution of the money. Thus he went on from confession to confession, until one day he told De Sade that the Court of Vienna was pressing him very strongly to sign a treaty by which he should pledge himself to observe absolute neutrality in any conflict in which Austria should be engaged, promising to make over to him, in exchange, the revenues of the Teutonic Order, of which he was titulary, but whose funds had been unscrupulously appropriated by the House of Prussia for the last two centuries. "What ought I to do?" said he, "I assure you I cannot sleep." De

Sade, taking good care not to appear to be in a hurry to turn this overture to advantage, simply advised him to take some soothing medicine, and put away from his mind all the anxieties that were troubling him. "Ah!" replied the Prince, much affected, "you are a true friend; you are the only one who cares for me. If you were not the envoy of France, I would be guided by no advice but yours. But they assert that I ought to say nothing to you, because if I tell you anything, you will go and repeat it to the Bavarian minister." [3]

De Sade was right in believing that he was gaining ground every day, and that when the time came everything would be settled by his management, but what he had done and was doing, quietly, secretly, and without seeming to meddle with the matter, could not be assisted in any way, indeed could only be impeded by the solemn arrival of an ambassador in great state. Not that Belle-Isle could not, in his time, have played the boon companion as well as another, but that he was now so cramped and fettered by the dignity of his position, that it was not possible for him to take pity on human weaknesses. Thus it fell out that his formal visit, which could only be a short one, was received with cold and ceremonious deference that might deceive the ambassador himself with regard to its

[3] Count de Sade to Amelot, March 10, 33, and *passim*. (*Correspondance de Cologne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

effect, but left De Sade under no mistake whatever. The Count wrote on the 22nd of March, "M. de Belle-Isle arrived on Monday. Everybody trembles, everything yields before him, the Elector himself dreads his presence, but I am very much afraid that presence has only slaked, not extinguished the cabals." In fact, when Belle-Isle was gone, having gained nothing but merely vague protestations of respect and regard for the King of France, De Sade was at no loss to perceive that the Elector was sulking with him, and keeping him at a distance: when he begged to be informed of the cause of this disgrace, he obtained the following dry answer: "You brought M. de Belle-Isle here to scold me like a child."[4]

De Sade's despatches, in which he relates how a tender reconciliation followed this momentary rupture, are well worth quoting here. His account of how he got deeper than ever into the confidence of the Elector, and at length, boldly attacking politics, succeeded in inducing him, by dint of coaxing and threats (*à force de fadeurs et d'injures*, as he expresses it), to pledge himself to conform to the wishes of France, and at the same time to send back the treaty that Austria had asked him to sign. The last scene, in particular, would lose all its point, if the principal actor in it were not permitted to be spokesman.

"A journey to Arenberg (a hunting-lodge near

[4] De Sade to Amelot, April 18, 1741.

Bonn), has been talked of for some days past," he writes to the minister, "and it was decided that the Elector should not go, if the foreign ministers wanted to follow him. . . . I had appeared extremely cold when this trip was talked of; then, when the day was fixed, and he could not possibly get out of it, I went to the Elector, and told him that I did not wish to leave him, that I should be in despair if I had to be four days without seeing him. He began to laugh, and pointed out the inconvenience of the journey; I replied that it would be much worse for me to remain at Bonn without him. He seemed pleased at my resolution, but he begged me not to say that he had consented to my going, and to set out a day later than he, because he did not want any others. I was enchanted to obtain this sorry favour, and I could not give the King a greater proof of my desire to do my duty . . . the country, the roads, and the air, are all detestable. They go out shooting the 'Limoges cock' at two o'clock in the morning,[5] and not to miss a moment, they sleep in the wood; the Elector in a log hut, and we under trees without any leaves."

The shooting-party took place, and it was in the midst of the forest, and in the middle of the night, that the Resident, feigning to have received a post from Versailles, took, so to speak, the Elector by the throat, to get a positive answer from him.

[5] The *coq de Limoges* is a sort of grouse.

"I told him that I had the King's orders to learn his intentions respecting the treaty proposed by the Queen of Hungary. He said this was no place for that matter, and I must wait until he got back to Bonn. I told him the King particularly wished to have a *coq de Limoges*. He replied that there was nothing easier than to send back the courier with the bird, and give him time to decide upon his answer. I said the cock would be very ill received if it arrived all alone, and that my courier should not go without the answer. Unfortunately we were in the midst of a forest, and had neither pens, ink, nor paper. We came back yesterday, and this morning he sent for me, quite early, and told me he had made up his mind never to separate himself from the King. I was about to embrace his knees, but he threw himself upon my neck; we both had tears in our eyes. He told me that I had plucked him from the edge of a precipice, that he had been on the brink of ruining himself. He sent for the 'grand master' (*hofmeister*), gave him a key, and told him to take out of a certain drawer the treaty which the Queen of Hungary had sent, to restore it to her agent at Cologne, and to inform him that he (the Elector) had pledged himself to France, and could hear nothing more on the subject. He then asked me whether I would wish him to write to the King; I said that I was sure his Majesty would have great pleasure in receiving the assurance

of his attachment. He then sat down to write, and I left the room. He came to look for me himself, showed me his letter, and asked me whether I was content. I said 'Yes.' He then inquired whether I would wish him to ask anything from the King for me. "Yes," said I, "that he will leave me with you all my life." We parted very well satisfied with each other; but pray, Monseigneur, be very careful not to grant me that favour. I was obliged to say the King wanted a *coq de Limoges;* you may keep it, provided you tell me in your next letter that the King has been pleased with the present he has had. The bird, indeed, is hardly worth eating; if at all, it is in a cold pasty." [6]

A few days later, De Sade, still sticking to the kitchen, records a striking proof of the high favour he has attained to. "My cook," he writes, "officiates sometimes for the Elector, who eats of all the dishes he cooks, and announces that he has cooked them. When the Elector has been helped, they go the round of the table. So long as M. de Colloredo was here, none of his party ventured to taste them; now they all eat, and all praise them."

At a later date he writes: "The Elector places no bounds to his confidence in me. A week or ten days ago, the Master of the Horse asked him how many wigs his coachman was to have for his entry

[6] De Sade to Amelot, April 3, 18, 1741. (*Correspondance de Cologne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

into Frankfort. According to his custom, he answered, 'Ask Count de Sade.' The Master of the Horse went out muttering, 'Count de Sade and the wigs may go to the devil!'"[7]

Mayence was a more important scene of action than Trèves and Cologne. The Archbishop was invested with the dignity of Arch-Chancellor of Germany and dean (*doyen*) of the electoral body. In this latter capacity it fell to his charge to convoke and preside over the Diet, and this gave him facilities for fixing the date of meeting at any moment he might think propitious to the views which he wished to favour, and besides, it was for him, in the present case, to give at least a provisional decision on a very delicate question that had just arisen. The House of Austria did not enjoy any electoral right except that which was attached to the crown of Bohemia. To recognize Maria Theresa's exercise of this right was to cut short the dispute that had arisen between her and the Elector of Bavaria, and the Queen herself had complicated the difficulty by transferring her litigious right to her husband at the same time that she gave him the regency of her States. Was this assignment valid, and would the vote of Bohemia, as represented by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, be reckoned among the number of the suffrages

[7] De Sade to Amelot, June 15, December 5, 1741. (*Correspondance de Cologne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

by the same title as the others? On the day of the opening of the Diet, the Elector of Mayence must prejudge the question to a very considerable, although not a decisive extent, by calling for, or rejecting that vote. For this reason Colloredo was even more anxious to forestall France than he had been at Cologne, and Belle-Isle found the ground occupied; indeed he was afraid for a while that he should not be received. His apprehension was groundless; the audacity of such a measure would, indeed, have been too great. The Elector, on the contrary, on receiving the letter that announced the arrival of the ambassador extraordinary from the hands of the French resident, pressed it to his heart, and kissed it respectfully. "Assure the King," said he, "that I regard his being willing to aid us with his good offices as a great boon. I flatter myself, however," he added jestingly, "that the friendship he shows us is not of the same kind as that which the King of Prussia swore to the Archduchess the other day." [8]

Belle-Isle resolved to act with vigour, and at once to attack the obstacle. He was informed that his principal difficulty would be the opposition of Count d'Elz, the Elector's nephew, whose influence over the feeble mind of his uncle

[8] Blondel, French Resident, to Amelot, January 25, 1741. (*Correspondance de Mayence.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

was said to be all-powerful. The exact sum that Colloredo had paid the Count for his support, was even named unhesitatingly. Belle-Isle went direct to Elz, and, without circumlocution, laid before him the following alternative: a million (livres) to be placed in the hands of any banker whom he chose to name, to be drawn out by the Count twenty-four hours after the election, if the vote of the Archbishop was in conformity with the views of France; if that offer was refused, the King should know, and in case of war would be sure to remember, who his enemy was. In the event of the Archbishop's death—he was old and infirm—it would be an easy matter to render the position of his family untenable at Mayence, where they were not popular. The Archbishop-Elector's nephew, quite bewildered by this sweeping onslaught, stammered out a few words about the "engagements of honour" which had been made with Charles VI. shortly before his death, and then surrendered or appeared to surrender at discretion, on condition that the transaction should be kept profoundly secret. "Make your mind easy," said Belle-Isle, "I shall be at least as discreet as Count Colloredo was, about the hundred thousand francs he gave you." Great was the indignation of the Count, who protested that the story was a base calumny. "How can such things be believed?" he exclaimed. "Does not everybody know that the

Grand Duke of Tuscany is a miser, who will never pay anything?" Upon this, Belle-Isle, who was, quite as anxious as the Count that the bargain should not become known, brought the conversation to a close by warning his new associate that, if he allowed the least hint of it to escape, and especially if an Austrian agent got hold of it, a formal, public, and categorical denial should be sent to him by post from France.[9]

In writing an account of this conversation to the ministry, Belle-Isle expressed his annoyance at finding "engagements" of conscience constantly opposed to the advantageous offers made by himself. "These engagements, entered into for the exercise of a sovereign right, are certainly illicit," said he. "Could not a consultation by learned doctors be held to prove their nullity, and bestow on them the epithet they deserve? Such a consultation might be very useful in overcoming the scruples of the Elector of Mayence, whether they are feigned or real, and those of the Elector of Trèves, which I take to be more sincere, by making them reflect seriously."[1]

Nothing could be more congenial to the Cardinal's turn of mind than this double operation, half pecuniary and half theological; so he answered in

[9] Belle-Isle to Amelot, April 8, 1741. (Private Letter. *Correspondance de l'Ambassade à la Diète de Francfort.*)

[1] Ibid.

all haste: "The King was pleased to read from beginning to end the despatch in which you give an account of the long conversation that you have had with the nephew, and in which you have exhausted the matter. He seems to be not insensible to it, and I do not despair of your finding him disposed, on your return, to give you his promise in writing. You have taken a most necessary precaution by telling him that you will give him a formal denial if he ventures to reveal what you have confided to him. I am going to set the consultation on foot to prove the nullity of the engagements into which some of the electors have entered with the late Emperor, and your idea with respect to this seems to me all the better that principles are easy to establish on this matter, and that the Court of Vienna would not venture to contest them. When the consultation has been held, his Eminence will consider under what form it ought to be presented to the public, as the opinion of the French doctors could not but be suspected."[2]

From Mayence, Belle-Isle, went direct to Dresden, carefully avoiding Munich, lest he might betray his preference too openly. Taking our leave, with him, of the ecclesiastical territory, it seems as if we ought to have done with that mixture of surface religion and social corruption, with those

[2] Amelot to Belle-Isle, April 18, 1741. (*Correspondance de l'Ambassade à Berlin.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

intrigues of the sacristy and the ante-chamber, which are so repugnant to Christian readers at the present day. In fact, the change of atmosphere would have been sharp and sudden, had Augustus III., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, borne even a distant resemblance to his father, who had preceded him in that double sovereignty. Frederick Augustus, the sometime successful rival of Charles XII., was (as all Voltaire's readers know) a high-born adventurer, who prided himself no more upon constancy in religion, than upon fidelity in love or in politics. "He was," says the witty historian, Lemontey, "by his birth a Lutheran, by his ambition a Catholic, in his morals a Mussulman." His life had been passed in taking, losing, and retaking a crown, and as diversion by the way, in taking and leaving mistresses of all sorts, and in every rank of life. He had begun like a hero of romance; he had ended like a pasha in his seraglio.

The son inherited neither the vices nor the qualities of the father. Weary of the spectacle of trouble and disorder continually presented to his youth, he had early taken refuge in an unintelligent devotion, which did not fortify his timid nature. He occupied himself solely in making sure of salvation in the next world, and tranquillity in this, and to render his attainment of these objects doubly certain, he took Padre Guarini, an Italian monk, for

his director, and Count Brühl, a Protestant, for his minister. He never formed a resolution except by the advice of the monk, and he never carried one out except with the concurrence of the favourite. His two directors had the good sense to agree perfectly between themselves, and he was left at liberty to indulge his natural taste for sport, and to collect those magnificent works of art for which the museum at Dresden is indebted to him.

His peace was, however, disturbed by two causes, of anxiety—the sullen humour of his Polish subjects and the restless ambition of his neighbour, Prussia. His fears had been kept very active indeed, since the throne at Berlin had been occupied by a young sovereign who was making a commotion everywhere. In vain had Frederick, before he entered Silesia, proposed to Augustus to join him in his enterprise, and promised him a share in its spoils; the advances of the King were only a proof of perfidy in the eyes of the Elector of Saxony. He was convinced (and in this he was not altogether wrong) that the rogue's intention was to embroil him with Austria, and thus to create an additional danger for Maria Theresa, so as to force her to capitulate on better conditions, while Frederick might afterwards turn against those whom he would have compromised. The Queen, his wife, to whom he was attached with inviolable fidelity and all the affection possible to so egotistical a nature, was a

daughter of the House of Austria, and very sensitive to any wrong done to her family. Probably, if it had been proposed to her to consider herself as the head of the house in default of a male heir, and to take the place of her cousin in virtue of that title, she might have lent a willing ear to the overture; but Belle-Isle was perfectly well aware that she would not agree to any such scheme of substitution to the advantage of her younger sister, the Electress of Bavaria. The foreign ministers, Austrian, English, and Russian, being informed of the attitude of the royal pair, neglected no means of sustaining it, and endeavoured to procure positive pledges from the Elector. Two treaties were proposed for his signature to Augustus III., one with Austria, which closely resembled that which had been offered to the Elector of Cologne, the other a treaty into which Russia and England were to have entered, and by which Frederick would have been threatened with a formidable coalition before France had arrived at a decision.[3]

The only support on which Belle-Isle could reckon, under these unfavourable circumstances, was that of an absent and distant, but still powerful advocate; Maurice, legitimatized Count de Saxe, the natural brother of the King, the son of the beautiful Aurora von Königsmark, and already a lieutenant-

[3] D'Arneth, vol. i. p. 206, and following. Droysen, vol. i. p. 250 and following.

general in the French army. Maurice de Saxe was the first-born of the innumerable bastards of Frederick Augustus, and that he had always been his father's favourite, was due, partly, no doubt, to the reminiscences of youth, but chiefly to his own precocity and talent. It was acknowledged on all hands that the bastard inherited from his father all those brilliant and manly qualities which certainly had not fallen to the share of the legitimate son: unfortunately for morality, history has supplied us with more than one example of a similar division of gifts. Augustus III. so far from feeling any jealousy of the superiority of his natural brother, regarded and treated him with affection that was positively deferential, and would certainly have let him take an influential share in his Councils if the young man could have been induced to remain in Saxony. But, either because the field was too narrow for the employment of his brilliant faculties, or because ambition can never be at ease on the steps of a throne it may not hope to ascend, Maurice was eager from the first to figure upon a much larger stage. The charm that France then exercised over the imagination of all men had fascinated Maurice from his boyhood: he took service in our army, and at this time had been living for nearly twenty years in Paris, where he indulged in all the pleasures to which he was addicted, without, however, neglecting the study of the art of war, or

abandoning his desire for military fame. He seized every opportunity either of fighting or amusing himself with equal readiness; his presence animated, and his inexhaustible spirits enlivened the camp or the green-room equally, and he was a prime favourite alike with great ladies, leading actresses, and military men. The freak which took him off to the North in hopes of laying hands on the sovereignty of Courland, had detained him only a few months from his favourite place of abode; and that deed of prowess had made him more than ever the fashion, while it had sharpened his appetite for adventure and renown. He was always on the alert; his ears were always open to the first summons of fortune.

The death of Charles VI. appeared to him to be the decisive moment of his destiny. "Here is the general muddle," he immediately wrote to Count Brühl, "and I have a part to take in it." The event did seem, in fact, to be a great chance for him, for, as he had never forgotten what blood it was that ran in his veins, in spite of absence and distance, a great war in which his natal country and that of his adoption were to fight side by side, and in which he might work for the aggrandizement of his family, while remaining in the ranks, and perhaps taking the command, of the greatest army in the world, would be the crown of his wishes, the ideal of what he himself called his "dreams." He therefore flung himself into all the projects of Belle-Isle with

passionate enthusiasm. He wrote letter after letter to Dresden, each one more pressing than the preceding, to prepare the way for the overtures of the French ambassador. Opportunities for returning to the charge were not wanting, for he had never ceased to maintain a constant correspondence with his brother, and had even supplied him regularly with a chronicle, sometimes political, sometimes social, and occasionally scandalous, of what was going on at Versailles. If the authorities of the Dresden archives are ever induced to allow the collection of those documents to see the light, it will no doubt appear that anecdotes and gossip gave place at this juncture to bellicose persuasion and exhortation, couched in incorrect, but fiery language, rendered still more striking by incredibly bad spelling. But it was not nearly enough that he should write; Maurice would have liked to accompany Belle-Isle in person. He flattered himself that his mere presence would have won the consent of his brother, and even brought the "neighbour's feud" between Dresden and Berlin to an end.

"If I could," he wrote to Belle-Isle, "I would propose to go to Saxony and also to Silesia. I believe that I could bring these two kings to an agreement in a very few days. He of Prussia, likes me well. I think he would have more confidence in me than in any one whom the King of Poland can send

to him. That being done, I would come back, and undertake to manage the King of Poland, whether he liked it or not.[4] "I admire your luck," he adds; "you are going to be the umpire of Germany; to settle the fate of the States, of the Kingdom, and of Empires. Never has mortal, since the days of the Romans, been in such a position."[5]

Belle-Isle, backed by this powerful auxiliary, and guided by his advice, occupied the ground with all his batteries in position beforehand. And this time he was met on his arrival, on the 15th of April, by news of an encouraging nature. An important encounter between the troops brought from Austria by Marshal von Neipperg, and the Prussian army commanded by Frederick himself, had taken place four days earlier, in the plains of Mollwitz in Silesia. Although the fortune of the day had been for a long time dubious, and the details of the action were confused and contradictory, it was ultimately certain that the Austrian general had beaten a retreat, and that the Prussians remained masters of the field of battle. This unexpected check produced a great commotion among the Austrian

[4] The original is an idiomatic phrase, "Je me ferais fort de faire sauter le bâton, comme on dit, au roi de Pologne."

[5] Maurice de Saxe to Belle-Isle, August 9, 1741. (*Correspondance de Saxe.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I venture to make a quotation in advance from this letter, but it is only a vivid summary of several preceding letters written in the same sense. For everything relating to the youth of Maurice de Saxe, the interesting biography of M. Saint René de Taillandier may be consulted.

party at the court; the Queen was so much affected by it, that she was obliged, as a diplomatist writes, "to take a precautionary purgative," and the King, not knowing what to think, kept out of sight.

Belle-Isle, turning this incident to advantage with the confidence natural, and perhaps necessary, to those who are carrying out great designs, believed for a moment that everything was about to yield before him, and after several interviews with the two favourites, he did, in fact, obtain from Guarini, the significant promise that he would write to his superiors at Rome, to inquire whether the King of Poland was bound in conscience by his engagements towards the Pragmatic Sanction. After the lapse of a few days, however, Belle-Isle was forced to perceive that his progress was arrested, that the adversaries were taking courage, and once more lifting up their heads. It was known that King Augustus had granted interviews to the Austrian minister, and that the latter appeared satisfied with them. What had happened, and what was the cause of this check? The answer was not impossible to guess, and at all events it was soon obtained.[6]

When the exact narrative of what had taken place at Mollwitz was made known, the circumstances which had preceded the victory tended rather to

[6] Droysen, vol. i. p. 250 and following. Belle-Isle to Amelot, April 16, 1741. (*Correspondance de Saxe.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

diminish than to magnify the idea that had been formed of the conqueror. Everybody knows all about that strange day of Mollwitz, on which Frederick had a narrow escape of serving his apprenticeship to war at his own expense, and received, without meriting them, the first favours of fortune. We know that the Prussians seemed to have lost the battle during the early part of the day, so completely indeed, that Frederick, thinking all was hopeless, effected a precipitate retreat, and that it was his lieutenant Marshal Schwerin, who, being less easily discouraged, held out, regained the advantage, and decided the success of the Prussians, in the absence of the general-in-chief. Long afterwards, Frederick himself admitted, in his "Memoirs," his errors—those of youth and inexperience—on that occasion with a good grace which could no longer cost him much. The great mistake was that he took the command of one of the divisions of his army in person, instead of remaining at the centre of action, so as to overlook and control the whole. His own corps having given way before the others, he found himself involved in this partial rout. He bases some excellent advice to young soldiers on his recollections of Mollwitz, pointing out to them that they ought not to be too ready to believe that the game is lost. Nevertheless his own retreat although it was probably unavoidable, was effected with such precipitation that it had all the appearance

of flight. The King was much better mounted than the rest of his cavalry; his horse carried him far in advance of the others in this backward race, and when he drew rein before the town of Oppeln, where he expected to be in safety, he had a very slender escort.

But, for a crowning misfortune, the little town had, unknown to him, been occupied on that morning by a party of Austrians, so that he had to gallop off with all speed, on pain of being recognized and taken. The night was falling, and the fugitives were obliged to take refuge in a mill, where the King passed long hours of waiting, in a terrible state of mind, which he betrayed a little too plainly. It has even been asserted that he was heard to invoke the mercy of God, no slight proof of emotion on the part of Frederick. At dawn of day, a messenger from Marshal Schwerin arrived at the mill to announce his victory, and restore the King to his army, "all covered," said the jesters of the time, "with fame and flour."

One of the most comic incidents of the day was the misadventure of Maupertuis, an eminent savant honoured with the friendship of the king. The honest mathematician, remembering that he had served in the dragoons, and wishing at once to pay his court and to display his valour, had insisted upon accompanying his master to the field of battle, but he had been provided with a very indifferent

steed (it was not, however, an ass, as Voltaire has maliciously said), so that when speed became necessary, he was left behind at the first start into a gallop, and entirely forgotten by all his companions, including the King, who never even inquired what had become of him. A party of Austrian hussars arrested him, despoiled him of his best garments, and conducted him to Vienna in a sad condition. There he was recognized and re-clothed at the expense of the Queen of Hungary, and a few days afterwards he was sent back to Berlin, to be exchanged for Cardinal Zinzendorf, whom Frederick set at liberty, saying, that to exchange a cardinal for a geometrician was a profitable bargain. The effect of the victory was rather spoiled by the jokes that abounded on all sides. Frederick himself felt this when he wrote to Voltaire, with modesty and good taste, "They say we have beaten the Austrians, and I am inclined to believe it." Jesting is a consolation which the beaten are too apt to seek, but it has never yet repaired a loss. Frederick, besides, was not a man likely to leave the laugh for long on the side of his adversaries.

The rumour that he himself, either disgusted by a first experience, or eager to profit by a first success, was lending an ear to proposals of peace was a more serious matter. Lord Hyndford, the new ambassador from England, a young nobleman

who stood high in Walpole's favour, was on his way to Berlin, with the express purpose of making a fresh attempt at conciliation, and it was asserted that a favourable reception awaited him at the Prussian camp. We may imagine the effect of the announcement of Lord Hyndford's appearance on the scene upon Belle-Isle, who had risked his high dignity far away in distant Germany, in the confident belief that there he should find an ally already in arms, and also its impression upon Valori, who had pledged his honour, after the example of Frederick, upon the certainty that the alliance was an accomplished and concluded fact.

Valori could not, however, doubt this change of front. On the 14th of April, four days only after the battle, he went to congratulate Podewils, and pressed for the signature of the treaty. He had been doing the same thing for a whole month; and now Podewils told him, though not without embarrassment, that the King considered certain new conditions were indispensable to the conclusion of the business. Frederick would have to be guaranteed that in the case of his being attacked by Russia, Sweden, and even Denmark, would enter the lists for his defence. He wanted, moreover, to have the right to take possession of the duchies of Jülichs and Berg, on the death of the Elector Palatine, on condition of restoring them to his heirs after the war. Lastly, he required that the nature and

effective force of the armed assistance which was to be given him by France, should be defined in the treaty by an express stipulation, instead of being left vaguely at the disposal of the Elector of Bavaria. He asserted that the menacing attitude of Russia, which was daily becoming more marked, rendered this increase of precaution necessary.

We must do Valori the justice to recognize that he did not for a moment mistake the real intention which underlay these fresh requirements; he understood in half a word, that the King's purpose was to reserve a pretext for a rupture, or at least to secure time to wait and see whether a better bargain could not be struck elsewhere. In any case, even had Valori been the dupe of this honest proceeding, readers of the latest Prussian publications cannot possibly make any mistake on the subject. There we find the following instructions, given in Frederick's own words, and by his own hand, on the 12th of April, that is to say, after coming out of the mill where he had passed the critical night :—

"As for the negotiation with France, we must put it off, without appearing to do so, by cajoling the Valori as much as possible."

On the following day he wrote, "You know my intentions, and how important it is for me to delay this affair, and to manage France carefully until the arrival of Lord Hyndford. In the meantime, you will continue to negotiate secretly with England and

Russia, so that we may be able to take either side according to circumstances."

The historian of the house of Prussia, far from disguising this double-dealing, does not hesitate to record it to the honour of his hero. He regards Frederick's alliance with France as an action for which his memory must be justified at any cost, and he is therefore anxious to establish the fact that Frederick had exhausted every means of delay, all those with which dissimulation could furnish him included, before he resorted to so unwelcome an expedient.[7]

Valori, being in great trouble, besought help. Belle-Isle was in the neighbourhood; he begged him to come and advise him, and Belle-Isle, who was as much troubled as Valori himself, did not wait to be asked twice. Leaving his unfinished task at Dresden, under one pretext or another, he hastened to Breslau, where Valori joined him, and after he had examined the newly proposed conditions, he declared that he took it upon himself to withhold them from Versailles. At the same time he sent a request to the King of Prussia, in a tone of somewhat imperative impatience, for permission to visit him at his headquarters.[8]

[7] "Political Correspondance," vol. i. pp. 222, 227. Droysen, vol. i. p. 250 and following.

[8] Private letter from Valori, April 28, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse*, and *Correspondance de l'Ambassade de Belle-Isle*, same date.) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This was pressing things home a little more closely than Frederick liked, so he wrote to Podewils, urging him to do all he could to obtain at least a few days' delay and grace. "Make a fine compliment," he wrote, "to M. de Belle-Isle in my name, upon his prosperous journey, and dwell also on my great wish to see him; but, in order to keep him for two or three days more at Breslau, you will assign as a pretext that the roads are not yet sufficiently safe, and that it will be necessary to send a good escort, to which I will not fail to see. You must, however, be very cautious, so that he may not perceive anything. You must come here with M. de Belle-Isle, you will cajole him to perfection." Two days afterwards, Frederick, seeing that he must make up his mind to the inevitable, added: "From the way that your news tells me Marshal Belle-Isle acquitted himself at Cologne, Mayence, and Trèves, I believe him to be imperious and positive in his opinions. He wants to decide at all hazards, and I want to wait for the arrival of the English charlatan, before I make up my mind, but in any case, we must see whether by flattering M. de Belle-Isle to the utmost, and letting him perceive that we have all the wish in the world to conclude, we may not contrive to put off the act until we have tuned our flutes with the English. There is no other means except to insist upon the aid of Sweden, and upon the

alliance of Denmark, also to do the timid (*faire les peureux*) for Russia."[9]

At last, on the 26th of April, Frederick had to make up his mind to receive the ambassador of the King of France at the camp of Brieg, near Mollwitz, and then no pains were spared to propitiate the Marshal. An escort of 150 carabineers, magnificently equipped and of great stature, was sent to Breslau to accompany his coach; pickets of infantry were posted at intervals upon the road; a corps of 2000 men preceded the equipages, and Frederick himself received the French ambassador at the entrance of the camp.

Belle-Isle, immediately on alighting from his carriage, expressed to the King his regret and surprise at arriving before the signature of a treaty, whose full execution he supposed he had come to secure; but Frederick avoided replying by taking the Marshal at once to visit the camp, and making his troops manœuvre before him. All this, of course, took place in the presence of a number of people; and thus a confidential interview was rendered impossible. There was no means of resuming the conversation that day; the weather was exceedingly bad; wind, rain, and snow were not favourable to out-of-door conferences. Frederick was, however, quite indifferent to this, and displayed great zeal in explaining his military organization in its

[9] "Political Correspondance," vol. i. pp. 233, 234.

smallest particulars, relating the incidents of the campaign with an abundance and volubility of words in which Belle-Isle could readily detect an intention of preventing him from putting in even one.

It was, however, so important to ascertain the state of the Prussian army, for whose support everybody was competing, that Belle-Isle could not regard a day passed in studying it as a day lost. He has carefully recorded his first impression in his Memoirs. Now that the comparison between the French and German armies is so deeply interesting to the public, the judgment passed by a Marshal of France, who had fought at Denain, upon the army that was destined to beat us at Rossbach, possesses a retrospective interest which military historians will estimate better than I can. "Nothing," says Belle-Isle, "can equal the excellence and the discipline of the Prussian troops: let us form what idea we may of those qualities, it does not approach the truth. The men are of singular height, and of such equal stature that it might be supposed they were all cast in the same mould. It never ceased to rain or snow, and there was a continual, tempestuous wind; this, however, did not prevent the King from showing me with what precision and rapidity his troops fired; I observed them doing this with surprise, but I ought also to say that this infantry places its whole trust in its fire. It does not learn, and it does not know any evolu-

tion. It is always placed on a height, in order that it may spread its fire, so that there is hardly any infantry which could stand before it if any obstacle between the two prevented their meeting. They would not hold against ours with side-arms at close quarters. The discipline which the late King established in his army is strict and perfect beyond all description; it is pushed to such a point that when these troops are under arms, the men are so drilled that they are not allowed to raise their heads, and are always obliged to keep their eyes upon a leader, who is called fugleman, so that they may follow all the movements and imitate them immediately. There is not a single officer in the battalion, who is not obliged at drill-time to make the same movements as the soldiers, or at least to make those which are relative to them, so that he knows the drill of the soldiers, and in order that each in his turn may know the word of command for his division, they are made to command the drill for the entire battalion alternately. It would be very desirable that all our officers should be subjected to the same rule."[1]

[1] "*Mémoires inédits de Belle-Isle.*" In the account (almost similar to that of the *Mémoires*) sent by Belle-Isle to Amelot on May 2, 1741, we find a singular assertion, which I leave to competent readers to explain; "*they fire as many as twelve shots a minute, and at least six when it is by platoon and by division, which is incredible unless one has seen it.*' No one has been able to tell me how such quickness of fire was compatible with the nature of the fire-arms used at that period.

After the review Belle-Isle partook, with the King and his officers, of a very plain dinner, composed, as usual, of only three dishes, one boiled, one roast, one of vegetables: there was dessert, and they drank champagne mixed with water. The repast, however simple, usually lasted a long time, the King frequently remaining an hour in conversation after its conclusion. That evening, however, he was obliged to grant Belle-Isle a private interview, and the ambassador was left *tête-à-tête* with Frederick under the royal tent, which was lighted by a single candle, and so poorly provided that the cold penetrated it from every side, while the wind threatened to carry it bodily away.

Frederick attempted to resume the tactics of the morning, pressing the Marshal to give his opinion of all that he had seen, and to favour him with such advice upon military art as a scholar and novice might expect from so experienced a master. Belle-Isle was not foolish enough to fall into this coarsely-baited trap for his vanity; on the contrary, he cleverly availed himself of this opening to introduce the business on which he had come. We will let him speak for himself.

"To his obliging, and I may even venture to say, rather exaggerated expressions with regard to myself, I replied with all due respect and gratitude, and took occasion thereupon to press him to keep his word by signing the treaty. I represented to him that he would

thereby furnish me with more frequent and more useful opportunities of advising him, since he did me the honour to assure me that he set store by my counsels. I added at this point a great deal about his fame; I represented to him that his conduct since his entrance into Silesia in imposing totally opposed and contradictory utterances upon his different ministers in the courts of Europe, had been so irregular that his reputation was suffering severely from it. I told him he was almost generally blamed and disapproved; that this consideration alone would perhaps have prevented every other sovereign except the King, and every other minister except the Cardinal, from listening to his principal proposals, and from being willing to enter into an alliance with him under such circumstances; and that the breach of his word to M. de Valori, of which I was now a witness, would be the climax of injury to his credit, should the public ever be informed of it, and that, besides the loss of his reputation, of which so accomplished a young sovereign as himself, and adorned with so many rare and great qualities, ought to be jealous, he was letting slip the King's friendship and confidence, and of their value and utility he could not be ignorant. I said that I begged pardon for speaking to him with military frankness, but I knew he would appreciate it, that it was an effect of the admiration with which his virtues inspired me, and that I could not give him a greater mark of my attachment and

profound respect. The King of Prussia answered with much kindness that he thanked me, esteemed me all the more for my frankness, and was delighted that I should speak to him in this manner; that he had always intended to ally himself with the King, and that he was so touched by the friendship which his Majesty had shown him, at a time when everybody else had turned their backs upon him, that he would never forget it all his life long. As, however, it was now rather late, he would not prolong the conversation with me that day, but would see me after dinner on the following day, that he would then open his heart to me, and that he was sure that I should not find fault with him."

This "opening of the heart," prepared for by twenty-four hours of reflection, did, in fact, take place on the following day, and the King began the conversation thus:—

"When I decided upon entering Silesia, I was well assured that this was the only means of bringing the Court of Vienna to admit the just claim which I have upon the four duchies that were extorted with violence from my grandfather, and to indemnify myself for all the arrears. I reckoned that I should be supported by France, who, having an interest as essential as my own, in abasing the House of Austria, and excluding the Duke of Lorraine from the imperial throne, and to mark at the same time the gratitude she owes to the Elector of Bavaria, could desire nothing better than to find a

Prince of the Empire sufficiently bold to make the first move.[2] I knew well that the Cardinal (whom I had sounded through Camas, and to whom I have written myself) all for peace as he is, would never enter upon such a course, if I proposed to him to undertake it in the first instance, but I did not doubt that he would give in to it when the blow was struck."

After this clever exordium, in which he assumed the merit of having forestalled the designs of France, and, so to speak, placed himself in the van of French ambition and interest, he gave expression more freely to what he called his just complaints. Advantage had been taken of the boldness of his resolution to put forward the pretensions of the Elector of Bavaria, but why had they not been effectively sustained? Why was the Elector not yet sure of the extent to which he might count upon the co-operation of France? The Queen of Hungary had been given time to recover from her surprise, and to seek allies in London, at the Hague, and even at Dresden: their union was almost accomplished, and he was left alone to defend himself against them.

It gave Belle-Isle no trouble to pursue a similar course of recrimination. "Was it possible," he asked, "to act at Versailles and at Munich, while an equivocal course was taken at Berlin, and parleying in an opposite sense was going on? If the

[2] "Pour attacher un premier grelot."

Elector were to advance personal pretensions by arms, without being assured of the support of at least one German prince of some importance, should he not be accused of disturbing the Empire, and would not his chances of attaining the Imperial throne be injured?"

"Ah! the Empire!" cried Frederick; "it is the strongest who is always right, it is the strongest who will be Emperor."

Belle-Isle then saw that the time was come to give him to understand that he saw his game plainly. "'Does your Majesty,' he asked, 'permit me to speak as your servant, and still with that frankness which your Majesty does not disapprove?' He replied that he not only approved, but insisted on this; then I said, 'Sire, all that your Majesty has just done me the honour to say to me would hold good if it were a question of opening a negotiation now, here, to-day; but you must permit me to tell you that since your Majesty's word has been given to M. de Valori, all these reasons are worthless. The result would be that your Majesty's engagements might depend upon the event, instead of being, they ought to be, when a great prince like your Majesty gives his word, as sacred and as inviolable as if a signed treaty existed. The King my master reckons upon that word, according to the statement made by M. de Valori, and what will be his astonishment to learn

this departure from it! I beg your Majesty to put yourself for a moment in the King's place; may he not think that your Majesty has only been trying to delude him, and has used the negotiation simply as a means of extracting a better bargain from the court of Vienna, to which, as well as to Russia and the maritime powers, your Majesty has perhaps communicated it? And then, can your Majesty suppose that more than one arrangement has not been proposed to the King, or that the Court of Vienna itself has not made, is not at present making advantageous proposals to the King to protect itself against your enterprises? I should not be astonished if the Queen of Hungary were to cede a province to the Elector of Bavaria, at that price, rather than a single village to your Majesty. Have you any doubt that Saxony will also join eagerly in the quarrel, and do you not think that such enemies will be more formidable to your Majesty than Russia? Where, in this case, would be your allies?' The King of Prussia, much moved by my discourse, interrupted me, saying that 'he was persuaded that the King and the Cardinal had a better opinion of him, and would not form so offensive a judgment as that.'"

Belle-Isle found it impossible to prolong the interview, and was obliged to content himself with the following assurances:—

The King felt himself unable to proceed imme-

diately to the signature of the treaty, because that conclusion, if it were known, would bring down a storm upon him from both England and Russia, and the succours of France not being yet in readiness, could not reach him in time to forestall the danger. He was about to come to blows with the Austrians once more; if fortune should again favour him, there would no longer be anything to prevent a close alliance with France. If in consequence of a defeat he were obliged to consent to a negotiation, he would secure sufficient delay to leave France and Bavaria at liberty to come to his assistance. In any case he would never enter into any engagements contrary to the views of the King and the Elector. He also apprised Belle-Isle that he would be obliged to receive the English envoy, and to confer with him, but this was "only to amuse him," and no umbrage was to be taken at it by the Court of Versailles.

It was impossible to extract another word from Frederick, and Belle-Isle was obliged to depart with these unsatisfactory assurances, and hardly restraining the expression of his suspicions. He was made the more uneasy, as he himself points out in a very acute observation, by having been allowed to speak so freely; this he regarded as a mark of profound dissimulation. "The politeness with which I was received," he says, "and the tokens of extreme kindness with which he loaded me, while, without

overstepping the bounds of due respect, I had not hesitated to speak very strongly to him, and to tell the hardest and most pressing truths, augment my distrust and my suspicion, for, considering the character of the King of Prussia, he would not willingly suffer that one to speak to him as naturally as I have done." [3]

If now we desire to see how a man of genius writes history, we may compare the above statement, made under a recent and completely fresh impression, with the narrative of the same visit as recorded by Frederick, twenty years after, in "L'Histoire de mon Temps." "M. de Belle-Isle," he says, "ambassador of France to the Electoral Diet which was held at Frankfort, came to the King's camp to propose to him a treaty of alliance on the part of his master. This treaty was sketched, but, all-advantageous as it appeared, it was not signed. The King did not wish to do anything hastily in a matter of so great consequence, and he reserved this course as a last resource. M. de Belle-Isle gave too much rein to his imagination: one would have supposed, listening to him, that all the provinces of the Queen of Hungary were put up for auction. One day, when he was with the King, as

[3] Belle-Isle, *Mémoires inédits. Correspondance de l'Ambassade auprès de la Diète*, April 29, and May 2, 1741. *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vol. iii. p. 430. I have had to combine the various narratives of these events; they differ upon some unimportant points.

he bore a more preoccupied and dreamy aspect than usual, the King asked him whether he had received any disagreeable news. 'None,' replied the marshal, 'but what is puzzling me, sire, is to know what we shall do with that Moravia.' The King proposed to him to give it as a bait to Saxony, so as to attract the King of Poland to the grand alliance; the Marshal thought this an admirable idea."[1]

There is not a line of this little story that does not contain an error, indeed a material impossibility. Belle-Isle had no need to bring, and still less to sketch, any treaty, since all the conditions had already been arranged in advance, and as for the ridiculous presumption imputed to him, we may judge whether it tallies with the state of anxiety into which he was thrown by the faithless irresolution of the King. The story has none the less been recorded as a fact in all the histories of the time, and it has been especially paraded by every French historian.

The travesty of the truth on this point is accounted for by the fact that Belle-Isle, although profoundly discontent with his interview, was obliged to pretend to be satisfied with it, on his return to Dresden, on pain of having to undo all he had undertaken to accomplish. Pledged as France was to Germany, and as he was to Cardinal Fleury, to be abandoned by Prussia at this stage, would have

[1] Frederick II., *L'Histoire de mon Temps*, ch. iii.

been a ludicrous disappointment, and the appearance of such a thing had to be avoided at any price. So soon, therefore, as the true situation was known at Versailles, Belle-Isle procured authority to go as far as possible in the direction of fresh concessions, so as to avert the infidelity of his fickle ally. Valori received instructions to bear this assurance to Mollwitz in person; those instructions were couched in terms far from encouraging, for they seemed to lay upon him the ridiculous task of taking the King of prussia on the sentimental side. "The King of Prussia," said the minister in his despatch, "will find few examples of candour equal to that with which the King has treated him; it is for him to see whether he has responded to this. It would be sad that a prince who has given so many proofs of valour, intelligence, and military talent in his first campaign, should find himself overpowered, and victory snatched from his hands. The Marshal de Belle-Isle speaks of him with admiration only, and his narrative has augmented the esteem with which his Majesty already regarded the King of Prussia, and the regret with which he finds him submitting to a yoke which perhaps he may never be able to shake off." [5]

Where Belle-Isle had failed, it was hardly to be expected that Valori would succeed, even

[5] Amelot to Valori, May 14, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

with the aid of compliments and sugared words. Valori had great difficulty in obtaining a moment of audience for the new offers of which he was the bearer; he was kept waiting for more than a week in a sufficiently mortifying attitude, being constantly put off, and seeing the hopes which he had been led to form one day perish on the next. His embarrassment was increased by the fact that at the very same time Lord Hyndford appeared to be received quite readily, and that the return of a courier whom he had sent to Vienna with conditions of agreement, the terms of which were not known, was expected. Meanwhile every one in the camp was anxious for a cessation of hostilities. Frederick had said to Belle-Isle, "I warn you that all Berlin is English," and of this fact Valori was only too well aware, for no one hesitated to say, loudly enough for him to hear it, that the French could be dispensed with, and Germany tranquillized without their assistance.

The only person who took no share in all this boasting was Podewils, who, although he was a stronger advocate for peace than any of the others, did not seem to expect it. "We are all for peace," he said to Valori, "and I think we are right, but nothing will come of all this, I promise you, and you will have us." [6]

[6] Valori to Amelot, May 14 and 16, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The truth, which only Podewils knew in its entirety, was that Frederick was neither more decided nor more sincere in one negotiation than in the other, and that he did not in reality know which side to take. Victory had placed him in possession of the prize that he had arrogated to himself; he enjoyed seeing the envoys of the great powers of Europe at the door of his tent, almost at his feet, and it was not displeasing to him that a situation which flattered his pride, and whose issue could not be unfavourable to him, should be prolonged. There were two alternatives; either Austria, cast down and disheartened, would be brought to capitulate, or France would become more eager in her offers of co-operation, more supple and accommodating in their execution. In either case Frederick would be a gainer by delay, and causing himself to be entreated.

Frederick, being in this mood, treated Lord Hyndford even worse than he treated Belle-Isle, while showing him a fair face in public. He called him rudely to account for the very unfavourable language towards Prussia used by the English envoys at St. Petersburg and the Hague, and also for a vote of the British Parliament, which had just granted a subsidy of 300,000*l.* sterling to the King of England, to enable him to come to the aid of Austria, according to former treaties. How, he asked, were these hostile dispositions to be

reconciled with the conciliatory words which were conveyed to him? Frederick, while putting the question, could answer it better than anybody else, for he perfectly well knew how the pacific inclinations of the English cabinet were thwarted by the warlike impatience of the parliament. He could the less affect to ignore that fact, because Lord Hyndford was accompanied by a Hanoverian envoy, who was charged to acquaint him privately with the sentiments of King George, and to plead the private interests of his Majesty. But he availed himself of this pretended grievance to raise his pretensions very high, and especially to express them very peremptorily. He declared that no arrangement would be possible on any other terms than the complete and definitive cession of the whole of Lower Silesia, including Breslau, the capital of the province. Lord Hyndford tried hard to bargain for some abatement of this ultimatum; he offered one or two duchies, in the place of four which were demanded, with any citadel that might be named; but he could obtain nothing, and had to transmit the conditions just as they were to Vienna, feeling very doubtful whether they would not be accepted.[1]

Frederick was indeed elated by victory, but his generous rival was not cast down by defeat.

[1] "Political Correspondence," vol. i. pp. 239, 240. Coxe's "History of the House of Austria," vol. i. p. 416.

"Never," says Voltaire, "was there any one more intrepid and more powerless."

Maria Theresa alone, of all her Council, had received the news of the unforeseen defeat of her troops, not, indeed, without sorrow, but without dismay, and almost without surprise. On the same day she wrote with her own hand to old Marshal Neipperg, who had tendered his resignation in despair, consoling and encouraging him. She directed him to avoid any fresh action until her allies, in whom she still hoped, should have time to come to her aid. Since then, the vote of the English parliament (the same vote which irritated Frederick) had seemed to justify her confidence, and when Sir Thomas Robinson, the English minister, submitted to her the proposals which his colleagues had sent him from Mollwitz, she immediately took a high tone with him. It was indeed her habit to be very plain-spoken with that diplomatist, for the worthy old man, fascinated by her grace, and touched by her misfortunes, had conceived a passionate admiration for her, of which his colleagues made a joke, and the Queen, feeling her ascendency over him, used it without much scruple in conversation. She asked him immediately, in a proudly ironical tone, how he reconciled the part he had just played, as bearer of the Prussian message, with the public expression of the national desire of his country? "And I also," said she, "am strongly desirous of an arrangement which

should give rest to Germany, but I should be very much obliged to England if she would tell me how to attain this end, without violating the Pragmatic Sanction, without preparing the way for the ruin of Austria, and endangering the balance of Europe. As for me, I see but one means; it is that England should at once furnish me with the aid in men and money which I have never ceased to demand as the strict execution of the still existing treaties." As for the concessions of detail, and the intermediary proposals which Lord Hyndford had thought proper to offer in her name, she declared that she had never authorized them, and she considered herself too fortunate that Frederick had refused them.[8]

This unequivocal answer put an end to all vacillation. No sooner was Frederick made acquainted with it, than he had Valori informed that he was ready to sign the treaty. There was no more reference made to the arming of Russia, to her threatened coalition with Saxony and England, in short to the bogey with which he had endeavoured to frighten Belle-Isle, and when Podewils, who had recently been instructed to "do the timid" (*faire les peureux*), found it rather difficult to contradict himself in this fashion, and made some objections, at least for form's sake, he was soundly rated, and threatened with dismissal on the charge of being sold to the English.

[8] D'Arneth, vol. i. p. 225. Coxe, vol. i. p. 417.

On the 7th of June, a convention was agreed to in two parts, one public, containing only an alliance of mutual defence, concluded between the two Kings of France and Prussia, for the term of fourteen years; the other private, consisting of the four following provisions :—

The King of Prussia consented to promise his vote to the Elector of Bavaria, and to renounce his claims to the Rhenish duchies.

The King of France engaged to guarantee to him the possession of Lower Silesia, and to send into Germany, within two months, an army of 40,000 men, also to bring about an immediate rupture between Sweden and Russia.

These latter points (one of them was difficult of execution) were the nett profit which Frederick derived from his cunning vacillation. The whole plan was to be kept secret until the preparations of France and Bavaria were sufficiently advanced for action to be taken.[9] Now that the point was settled, Frederick was full of such ardour, that it might have been supposed he had all along no

[9] "Political Correspondence," vol. i. pp. 246, and following, and 261. Droysen, vol. i. p. 272. The text of the treaty, which has never been published, is to be found in Valori's correspondence. The figure of 40,000 men is not expressly mentioned. It is merely said that France shall furnish to the Elector *all the means* necessary to enable him to act effectually, and to secure his country against attack. It was probably in the conversation between Frederick and the ambassador that the exact figure was named. See text of treaty in Appendix D.

other wish, and had now reached the summit of his hopes. "Monsieur, my Cousin," he wrote to the Cardinal, "I have just signed the alliance with the King your master. I answer for it to you, that you shall have no complaint to make of, and no room to repent of this alliance. I now deny that you are a better Frenchman than I am." Addressing Belle-Isle, the King added, with affectionate effusiveness: "It is on the faith of your promises, and on the things which you had it in commission to say to me, in the name of the King your master, and on the infinite esteem in which I hold your skill in war, that I have just signed the alliance into which you have invited me. Behold me, then, become a better Frenchman than M. de Belle-Isle, and as faithful to France as any of her allies have ever been. I delight by anticipation in admiring those manœuvres which you will effect, and those operations which, while they must be lessons for every soldier, will afford me assistance and support. Your name, as much as the strength of the King your master, induces me to ally myself with a prince who cannot but be well seconded by your services. Bavaria shall have my vote. Count on Prussia as upon France in everything; let them be no longer distinct. Adieu, dear friend, whom I burn with impatience to greet, victorious, before the gates of Vienna, and to embrace at the head of his own troops, as I have em-

braced him at the head of mine. Always believe in the perfect esteem and most sincere friendship, with which I am, my dear Marshal, your most faithful and inviolable friend."[1]

Experience had already taught Frederick that direct praise always gives less pleasure than that which comes indirectly from the public voice, because it is supposed to be less sincere, and he therefore wrote to Voltaire without asking him to keep the secret: "I have seen and conversed with the Marshal de Belle-Isle, who would be, in any country, what is called a very great man. He is a Newton in war, as agreeable in society as he is intelligent and profound in affairs, and does infinite honour to France, his nation, and his master's choice."

The enthusiastic tone of this epistle must have struck Voltaire's perspicacious mind as all the more remarkable, seeing that only a few days before he had received a letter from the King in a totally different tone. Frederick had merely said that, "M. de Belle-Isle and his suite struck him as sensible persons, and this was all the more curious, as in general all Frenchmen passed for arrant fools in Germany."

To quick perception half a word is enough. Voltaire instantly discerned, by the light of this contrast, the double game which his royal corre-

[1] "Political Correspondence," vol. i. pp. 251, 252.

spondent was playing, and the following verses which he sent in reply, were no doubt intended to apprize Frederick that he had been understood. The poet addresses himself to the various diplomatists waiting their turn at the door of the King's tent, thus:—

Hyndfort et vous, Ginkel,[2] vous dont le nom barbare
Fait jurer de mes vers la cadence bizarre ;
Veniez-vous près de lui, le caducée en main,
Pour séduire son âme et changer son destin ?
Et vous, cher Valori, *toujours prêt à conclure*,
Veniez-vous de Ginkel déranger les mesures ?
Ministres cauteleux ou pressans, ou jaloux,
Laissez là tout votre art ; il en sait plus que vous.
Il sait quel intérêt fait pencher la balance,
Quel traité, quel ami convient à sa puissance,
Et toujours agissant, toujours pensant en roi,
Par la plume et l'épée il sait donner la loi.[3]

Belle-Isle was at Nymphenburg, the Elector of Bavaria's residence near Munich, whither he had gone on leaving Dresden, when he received Frederick's flattering communications, and the more welcome news of the signature of the treaty. If he had been indifferent to compliments (and a lover of fame is never very reluctant or very clear-sighted in that respect), the fact that he was put out of pain, and had escaped from a false position, would

[2] Ginkel was the Dutch minister, and he and the English agent (whose name all French writers misspell) were inseparable.

[3] Frederick to Voltaire, May 5 and 13, 1741. Voltaire to Frederick, June 29, 1741. (*Correspondance générale de Voltaire.*)

have disposed him to accept them gladly. After hours of mortal anxiety, Frederick's consent, suddenly obtained, smoothed every path as if by enchantment, for Belle-Isle was not likely to meet with any resistance at Munich. The Elector, a prince of mild disposition and amiable manners, and the Electress, who was delighted beyond measure at the prospect of a crown, received him with open arms, treated him as a king and a cousin, and what was still more agreeable, listened to him as an oracle. He had long conferences with the Elector, during which he explained his plans of campaign, entering into the minutest details, and he was astonished to find that they were accepted with the greatest docility. Like all persons who are full of their own ideas, who like to hear themselves talk, and when they are not contradicted imagine that their listeners think as they do, the zealous ambassador ascribed to ready intelligence on the part of Charles Albert, what was in reality only the assent of a weak mind to designs too little understood to be contested. Belle-Isle was destined to learn by experience that this very weakness rendered the Elector incapable of carrying out his plans. In the meantime, Belle-Isle's influence induced him to accept arrangements in accordance with those which the King of Prussia had at length decided on signing, and, to complete the Marshal's satisfaction, the Spanish ambassador, Count de Montijo, had just

arrived from Frankfort in the nick of time, bringing the accession of his government to that alliance, and the promise of a useful diversion by Spanish troops to be directed against the Austrian possessions in Italy. It was, therefore, with a legitimate feeling of satisfaction, that Belle-Isle sent on to Fleury, on the 6th of June, the letter which he had received from Frederick; but he had the good sense to deprecate a portion of the King's praises, or rather he had the adroitness to transfer them to the Cardinal himself.

"The excessive eulogium," he writes, "that the King bestows upon me, and which I only merit by my zeal, would have prevented me from sending this letter, if it had not appeared necessary that I should do so, to confirm all that I have stated. I congratulate your Eminence with all my heart; this is a happy termination to a negotiation which you have conducted with equal skill and wisdom. The Grand Duke will be excluded from the imperial throne, and your Eminence will place the Elector of Bavaria upon it; you will have the glory of abasing for ever that house which is the rival and the enemy of France; you will confound the enmity and the envy of the King of England by the vigour of your operations; you will oblige the Russians to retreat within their former bounds. Never has any minister been more glorious and equally moderate. The point now is to complete these great

things, and as I persist more and more in my protest against the misfortunes of war, since war is inevitable let it be made with promptitude, and with such success that it shall be necessarily brief. All Europe will then be aware that your Eminence has made war only at the last extremity and against your will. It will do the King the greatest honour, and procure for the kingdom, peace, which your Eminence will have the satisfaction of establishing in a manner at once advantageous and durable."[4]

A grateful, but, at the same time, pressing letter from the Elector accompanied that of the Marshal. Fleury, understanding with half a word that he would have to pay for his fame, and that Belle-Isle's repugnance to war would translate itself before long into fresh demands for men and money, replied sadly, without any disguise of his feelings:—

"I have received the letter with which you have honoured me, as well as that of the Elector; to the latter also I am about to reply. His attachment to France certainly deserves all that the King does, and will do, for him. He must be regarded as the only prince in Europe who has loftiness and nobility in his sentiments, and order and consistency in his designs. It is unfortunate that he is not more rich and more powerful, and when I think that

[4] Belle-Isle to Fleury, January 6, 1741. (*Correspondance de l'Ambassade à la Diète.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

almost our only allies are princes in a position like that of the Elector, I cannot but be alarmed at the war on which we are entering. I acknowledge that the King of Prussia, to whom this does not apply, gives me more uneasiness than any other. His mind is quite unregulated; he will listen to no advice, and he forms his resolutions with great levity, without having prepared proper means of success. Good faith and sincerity are not his favourite virtues; he is false in everything, even in his fair words; I doubt much whether he is trustworthy in his alliance, because his own interest is his only principle. He wants to govern every one and act out of his own head without any concert with us; he is detested by all Europe. This portrait may perhaps appear to you a little too highly coloured, and as you have seen him more closely than I have, I leave you to judge, but I cannot prevent myself from fearing, that if an advantageous bargain were proposed to him, in case the Court of Vienna, or rather England, consider it essential for them to detach him from us, he would not be scrupulous as to the pretext on which he might separate from our alliance. I open my heart to you. I pray you to burn my letter. The King of Prussia writes to me almost in the same terms as yourself, but we might say of him what a foreign minister said, after having seen the Escurial, that the magnificence of the building was a proof of the

extremity of the fear that had made Philip II. take a vow to build it. The praises of the King of Prussia are founded upon a similar motive, and I acknowledge to you that they touch me very little. He does justice to you, and all the princes of Germany do the same. I accept your flattering auguries rather because you yourself are in a position to verify them than for any other reason."

The confidence of Cardinal Fleury in the flatteries of Frederick, was no doubt considerably modified by the fact that contrary rumours were circulating in Paris at the same moment. Correspondence from the camp stated that the King of Prussia had said openly that nothing useful could be done in concert with France, so long as she was governed by a vacillating and crafty old man.[5]

Fleury was only too right. Fifteen days had not elapsed after the signature of the treaty, and the ratification had not yet arrived, when difficulties arose about its execution, closely resembling those that had preceded the conclusion of it. Frederick, in his imperious way, wanted everything to be done in a twinkling, and all at once, and as the Diet of Sweden, on its side, when called upon to declare itself by the French Cabinet, made (as seemed natural enough) a demand to be guaranteed by treaty

[5] Frederick to Belle-Isle, January 17, 1741. (*Correspondance de l'Ambassade à la Diète.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. D'Argenson, *Journal*, vol. i. pp. 317, 327.

that Prussia, after having put her forward, should not abandon her, and as the organization of the Bavarian army was also retarded by the Elector's fear of being abandoned by Prussia, the whole question was once more opened. Valori received a haughty letter, in which Frederick gave him notice that the treaty must be held as null and void until better guarantees of the action promised by Versailles, Munich, and Stockholm should have been obtained. At the same time, Podewils was directed to comment upon this declaration by verbal communications, and we may guess how that minister, already very ill-disposed towards the French alliance, acquitted himself of his task, when we see in what terms it was prescribed to him in confidential instructions. Here is a specimen:—

"Tell M. de Valori that I shall not allow myself to be lured[6] by an ecclesiastic, and that if the Cardinal does not want to make war, he may do without my alliance. In a word, he must either go that way or out of the window."[7] At this point dates are important. The treaty was signed on the 5th of June; the demand was addressed to Valori on the 18th. Thus it was within twelve days, with the slow posts and difficult communications of the period, that Frederick insisted, under pain of a total

[6] A free translation of this contemptuous expression would be "humbugged," or "gulled."

[7] Frederick to Valori, June 13, 1741. To Podewils, July 12, 1741. ("Political Correspondence," vol. i. pp. 263, 277.)

rupture, on being certified that a declaration of war had been made on the Baltic, and a French army had reached the Rhine. The false pretence of quarrel was so transparent, that Belle-Isle, on being informed of these fresh demands by a dismal letter from Valori, could not resist the conviction that Frederick intended to break his word. "Could it be possible," he wrote, "that the King does not yet regard the treaty as signed? Does he mean to make its execution depend upon the co-operation of Sweden? Does he mean to regard the treaty as void, if all his fancies are not complied with? However," he adds, after reflection, "the actual situation does not allow of our taking words literally, and the excessive hastiness of the King ought to teach us to be more wise and more moderate. We must get all the good we can out of an alliance which we have desired, and we must close our eyes and ears to little things." Accordingly, he added to his private letter an ostensible one, evidently intended to come under the notice of the King of Prussia himself.

"I am convinced," he wrote, "that his Prussian Majesty, under a hasty impulse, wrote that letter to you, and that if you could have speech with that prince, he is so generous of heart and magnanimous that he will be concerned at having given way to such haste. But, although princes are men, and consequently subject to the defects of humanity, we must respect them even in their failings, espe-

cially when they are so amiable as the King, and when we may believe (of which I make no doubt), that the heart and the reflections of his Majesty have no share in the threats which he employs in the letter he has written to you."[8]

Only a very hard heart could fail to be touched by such forbearance. Frederick, besides, understood the persons with whom he was dealing, and he did not try threats with Belle-Isle, believing he had discovered other means of making him subservient to his designs. He still took a high hand with Valori, but confined himself to sending pressing exhortations to Belle-Isle, begging him to come without delay, so as to take the enemy by surprise, and always winding up with a glowing picture of the fame that was to be the reward of this bold action. "You can understand," said he, "the necessity of fulfilling your engagements without delay; the point is whether you will assist faithful allies, or never have any. France may at this moment strike the greatest blow she has ever struck in her life. Instead of creeping up to power, she can reach it in an Homeric stride, and you have before you the fairest harvest of laurels that ever a general in France has reaped."[9]

[8] Belle-Isle to Valori, from Frankfort, June 26, 1741. (*Correspondance de Prusse.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[9] Frederick to Belle-Isle, July 18, 1741. ("Political Correspondence," vol. i. p. 268.)

I know not whether these brilliant prospects disarmed the suspicions of Belle-Isle, and blinded him to the truth that the excessive demands of his ally were made for the purpose of serving, on occasion, as a pretext for rupture. If so, his judgment was strangely at fault, for to us who read the Prussian correspondence, the device is perfectly manifest. Frederick, by demanding the impossible, managed to keep a grievance always in reserve, ready to be produced on the day which should bring him satisfactory offers from London or from Vienna. This is abundantly evident from his instructions to Podewils to continue to haggle (*chipotiren*) with Lord Hyndford and the Hanoverian envoy, in order, as it is somewhere expressly said, "to keep a door always open on that side." We find the exact application of this precept of policy, in an autograph note written only a few days before the signature of the treaty. "We are dealing on one side with the most headstrong people in Europe, and on the other with the most ambitious. (The King is certainly referring here to Austria and France.) To go on playing the part of an honest man with rogues is a perilous thing; to be cunning with deceivers is a desperate game, and its success is very equivocal. What is to be done then? Just what your very humble servant and his minister are doing; make war, and negotiate. If there is anything to gain by being honest, we

will be honest; if it be necessary to make dupes, let us be rogues. I am, with much esteem, my dear Podewils, your faithful friend." [1]

To drive War and Negotiation abreast, and be free to choose at any moment between honesty and roguery, this was the plan whose development throughout the ensuing events we are about to follow.

[1] Frederick to Podewils, May 12, 1741. ("Political Correspondence," vol. i. p. 244.)

# APPENDIX.

# APPENDIX TO VOL. I.

## A.

### Opinions pronounced on the Character of Frederick II. before his accession, and during the first months of his reign.

I insert here several extracts from despatches, which afford some notion of the uncertainty that prevailed respecting the character of Frederick II. before he had taken the important step of invading Silesia. The portrait of Frederick as sketched by Marshal de Belle-Isle sufficiently explains why his most familiar associates were ignorant of his real disposition.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

The Marquis de Valori to M. Amelot,

*March* 18, 1740.

"The Prince Royal sets an example of unremitting circumspection in the simplest matters. I happen to know that he keeps his friend and chamberlain shut up with him in his room, and will not allow him even to approach the window. No one in the house knows that he is there. The prince passes four hours every evening writing with him. . . . This chamberlain is M. de Kayserling. . . . With the ex-

ception of his dissimulation, he seems to have the same disposition as his father. I speak of his dissimulation from what I have heard from those who know him best, and pride themselves on their attachment to him. They are convinced that his acquaintance will have to be made afresh, and that the Prince Royal will no longer be the same man, but they know not what kind of man he will be. M. de Tulmayer is of opinion, that many of those who reckon on his favour will be disappointed, and that the prodigious amount of business in which the prince will find himself involved, his need of able men, in order to repair his father's errors and to use the treasure of which he will find himself master to advantage, will, of necessity, force him to put science aside, and to bestow his confidence on those whose judgment may be of some service to him."

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

THE MARQUIS DE VALORI TO M. AMELOT,

*August* 6, 1740.

"The public are already astonished to find that they have deceived themselves by building hopes on generosity, goodness of heart, and affability: they recognize none of these qualities in the acts that emanate from the throne. As for myself I am afraid on account of the King's (Louis XV.) service, of considerable obstinacy and selfishness, together with a conviction of his (Frederick's) own superiority in mind and judgment. It is to be feared that this side of his character may lead him into serious errors."

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

THE MARQUIS DE VALORI TO M. AMELOT,

*October* 8, 1740.

"The King seems to have adopted a system of great economy. His father, the late King, was in the habit of lending money to the nobles of his States when they were in difficulties, at four per cent. interest. A certain Count Schwerin, finding himself in want of money, has petitioned the King his master for the same favour. He was told that the money should be lent to him, but that the King of Prussia requires five per cent."

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

THE MARQUIS DE BEAUVAU TO M. AMELOT,

*December* 17, 1740.

"Let there be no doubt as to the vast projects of the King of Prussia. I know, beyond a doubt, that in his heart he detests France; and that his real ambition and glory would be to humiliate us and diminish our power. I should not venture to state such a thing were I not quite sure of it, but I am so sure that I distrust every mark of friendship he may show us, and every word he may address to us."

MEMOIRS OF MARSHAL DE BELLE-ISLE.

*His opinion of the King of Prussia.*

"The various opinions that have been held con-

cerning the King of Prussia, and especially the difference between what was said of him when he was only Prince Royal, and what has been thought of him since he succeeded the King his father, oblige me to reveal my own opinion of this prince. The King of Prussia was endowed at birth with genius of the highest order, prompting him to great deeds; he is full of ardour, and acts with rapidity and decision; his intellect is lofty and expansive; he can perceive all the existing means of carrying out a design, and is not scrupulous in their employment: he is fertile in expedients, but as yet too inexperienced to contrive an immediate substitute for those that unforeseen accident may disturb; keen and penetrating in his judgment of men, quick to perceive their weaknesses and foibles, clever at taking advantage of them, too eager at times in pointing them out, vain, loving glory, jealous of the fame of others, he has been accused of presumption because he asked the advice of no one, either in war or politics, but he could not always ask it safely, those by whom he was surrounded, and who were in a position to give him good counsel, being devoted to the House of Austria; occupied exclusively with his own interests, which he thoroughly understands. He was consequently well aware how important an alliance with France was to him, and I was certain that he was profoundly influenced by all I had said to him, and that he only deferred the conclusion of the proposed treaty, until I should have informed my court of the various reasons for which he had postponed affixing his signature; for he was certain that France, who could not carry out her projects without

him, would at once begin to act. He is so convinced of the necessity of this alliance that we shall find he will support us in our designs against the Court of Vienna whenever he can do so with safety to himself, but also that he will cool, or will at most only help us secretly, and, in short, will abandon us altogether, should our errors, our misfortunes, or the weakness of our ministers, arouse in him any fear for himself, and lead him to suppose that he is about to be deprived of all support. The King of Prussia who, by nature, was a Machiavel, has been made still more of one, by Cardinal Fleury's weakness. He was aware that the minister went to war with reluctance, while his excessive slowness and want of good faith made the King fear that he would not keep it up, but that, on the slightest reverse, he would bring it to a close at his own cost.

"It was on that account that Frederick, from the time of his entry into Silesia, kept up constant negotiations with all his enemies, and carried them on with more or less spirit, according to our success or our reverses. Those persons who had only known the King when Prince Royal, united in praising him enthusiastically, attributing to him all the qualities of mind and heart that belong to a great and good man; but when they came to know him on the throne, they denied him the possession of any heart whatever. It is easy to understand this contradiction; during the time of his disgrace, which lasted up to the death of his father, it had behoved him to make a display of virtue in order to attract adherents, and to win the regard of those with whom he came in contact; and, that he might

interest them still more deeply in his favour, he thought it well especially to affect the virtues most directly opposed to his father's vices, and by so doing to render him the more odious. Such hypocrisy was easy to a prince who united to a cold heart a lively and cultivated imagination which supplied him every attractive expression of sentiment.

"On ascending the throne, he dropped the mask. It is even said that his vices surpassed those of his father, and that he added that of ingratitude towards his most intimate friends. It is possible that the latter accusation is to some extent unfounded; his friends clamoured for places, which should be the reward of merit and ability, and not solely of friendship."

## B.

NATURE AND PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE RESERVATIONS MADE BY FRANCE IN THE GUARANTEE GRANTED TO THE PRAGMATIC SANCTION BY THE TREATY OF 1738.

WITHOUT seeking to extenuate the righteous severity with which history, in my opinion, should judge the conduct of France towards Austria at the accession of Maria Theresa, it is nevertheless just to examine the arguments advanced by Cardinal de Fleury at the time to justify his breach of faith. It is well to be acquainted with them, were it only that we may estimate their value.

Fleury has invariably endeavoured to justify himself by contending that the guarantee given by France to the Pragmatic Sanction regulating the succession in Austria, made reservation that no injury should be done thereby to rights already acquired by third parties. The Emperor (according to every memorandum drawn up, at that epoch, in the name of France) having affirmed either in the text of the Pragmatic Sanction itself, or in the various accompanying declarations, that the only meaning of that Act was to maintain the legitimate and incontestable order of succession in full vigour in the States of Austria, if that assertion could be proved defective on any one point, the guarantee, which could not have greater value than the Act itself, would be deprived of all its efficacy.

How such a reservation was compatible with the imperative generality of the terms of that article of the treaty of 1738 by which the guarantee was stipulated (particularly with the expression *contra quoscumque*, which was seemingly inserted with the express purpose of excluding all examination of the rights or pretensions of any aspirant whatsoever to the Austrian succession) I have in vain endeavoured to understand. It is, however, certain, that the reservation, if not formally admitted, was known to and not directly contested by Charles VI. himself, as will be seen in the correspondence between that sovereign and the Cardinal. It appears moreover that a similar conditional clause was generally recognized as applicable, in virtue of a rule of public law, to identical or analogous guarantees which the other European cabinets, that of England in particular, had granted at the Emperor's request. I leave the explanation of this contradiction to others more versed than myself in the subtleties of the old European and Germanic law.

It is curious, at the present time, to study the use made by the Cardinal of that reservation, to encourage the pretensions and hopes of the Elector of Bavaria (even after the contrary assurances of the treaty of 1738) *sub rosâ*, and thus to keep a door open, should it be needed, for any event that might occur in the future. The study is not without interest, as it enables us to appreciate the character of the aged minister, whose chief characteristic seems to have been that he reached, but never went beyond the extreme point at which *finesse* must run the risk of being openly detected in duplicity.

The intimate relations subsisting between France and the Electoral House of Bavaria were more than a century old. To raise the Catholic German prince who came next in importance to the Archdukes of Austria, to the Imperial throne, was a design that had been formed more than once by Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. With this end in view, the entire House of Bavaria had attached itself to the fortunes of France during the long struggles of the seventeenth century; the friendship had been cemented by the marriage of the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV., with a Bavarian princess, while the Elector Maximilian had been placed, after the battle of Hochstadt, under the ban of the empire and deprived of his States, on account of his too great fidelity to his friendship with France. He had been reinstated in 1714, by the Treaty of Utrecht, but deserved something more than that inadequate reparation, and as the present could afford nothing better, the future had been pledged in his favour.

By a secret treaty signed in that same year, 1714, the King of France had expressly promised to support the candidature of the Elector of Bavaria, in the event of a vacancy in the imperial throne. It will be well to quote the words of that engagement which was first mentioned by the historian Lemontey, but has, I believe, never been published.

"The King being convinced," so runs clause 12 of the secret treaty, "that in default of princes of the House of Austria, no German prince is more capable of sustaining the dignity of the imperial crown, promoting the welfare of religion and the

preservation of peace than the Elector of Bavaria, his Majesty promises that, should the imperial dignity become vacant, he will use care and effort, friends, money, and troops if necessary, to raise his Electoral Highness to the said dignity; he engages, moreover, to pay special attention to any proposition or attempt that might be made to procure the election of a king of the Romans; to oppose it strongly, if made, and to prevent that dignity being conferred on any one whomsoever not belonging to the House of Bavaria, provided that his Electoral Highness has at that time, no strong reasons for thinking differently." [1]

At this period, as we see, the only question was that of a candidature to the imperial dignity. There was no question of a claim to the patrimonial inheritance of the Austrian states, although in that same year Charles VI. had drawn up and promulgated the act, by which the succession, in all its integrity, was settled on his children without distinction of sex. But the Emperor was still young; he and his consort were both at an age when they might expect a numerous progeny, and his precautions seemed to proceed from an excess of prudence and a distant outlook which it was unnecessary to take into consideration.

But thirteen years later, in 1727, circumstances were greatly altered. The Emperor was advanced in years, and had only two daughters, while the health of the Empress was too delicate for any hope of male heirs. The time had come for the Emperor

[1] *Correspondance de Bavière*, 1714. Department of Foreign Affairs.

to take the necessary steps for the strengthening his testamentary provisions, and for others who intended to oppose them to prepare for contest. And in fact, that was done.

On the one hand, the ambassadors of Charles VI. put forward their whole strength in order to obtain the adhesion of the powers to the Act of Succession that was already known as the Pragmatic Sanction, and the German Diet was put in possession of a proposition tending to confer the character of a law of the Empire on that act. On the other, the Elector of Bavaria, whose wife was an archduchess, and who counted two Austrian princesses among his ancestry, began to speak freely of the rights that such kinship might confer upon him whether by reason of the testamentary documents of the two emperors, Ferdinand I. and Ferdinand II., from whom he descended, or by applying the rules of reversion which, according to him, were admitted by the Germanic law in the case of female succession.

France had, at that epoch, no apparent reason for sparing Austria, and in any case, Fleury, who had only just attained to power, was not yet in a position to deviate from the traditionary policy of his predecessors. He made no objection, therefore, to encourage the pretensions of the Elector; the secret treaty of 1714 was renewed, and a new article was added, that treated specially of the Austrian succession in the following terms:—

"Whereas in default of princes of the House of Austria, the Elector of Bavaria would have legitimate pretensions to some of the States belonging to

that house, and in particular to the kingdom of Bohemia, the King promises in that case to use his best offices in order to obtain due justice for his Electoral Highness, and if his offers should be unavailing, his Majesty will then agree with his said Electoral Highness as to the assistance that will be necessary to prevent his defeat by the efforts and power of his enemies."

Emboldened by this secret support, the Elector Charles Albert publicly refused his adhesion to the Pragmatic Sanction, at the Diet at which that act was declared to be a law of the Empire, and added to his refusal the formal reservation of his own claims. Thus he alone withstood the Imperial Power.

It was at this moment that a new struggle between France and Austria, concerning the succession of Poland, which was destined to last for several years, began. Fleury, who had consented to engage in the contest, though hardly liking it, was conscious of the necessity of securing allies to sustain it; he therefore warmly congratulated the Elector on his noble attitude. In a private letter, dated February 22, 1731, he somewhat enthusiastically called him the "stay of Germanic liberties," and severely blamed the *servile obedience, and the selfishly interested views which had induced the other powers to give a guarantee so prejudicial to their interests.* He went on to say that the Elector must stand firm in order to give time to all those princes to recover from their *intoxication* and *fascination*, and, in support of these expressions, he did not shrink from giving a formal guarantee to the Elector against the con-

sequences that he might incur by his attitude of hostility to the court of Vienna.

A new treaty was signed in 1733, also under the seal of secrecy, containing in Clause 4 the following words :—

" His Electoral Highness having considered it his duty, as a faithful and zealous member of the Germanic body, to refuse his guarantee to the Pragmatic Sanction, for reasons fully explained and protocoled in the Act of Protestation made in his name at the Diet of Ratisbon, when the matter was brought forward, declares that he persists and will continue to persist in the same principles, dictated to him by honour and conscience, and his Most Christian Majesty promises, on the other hand, to guarantee all the States of his Electoral Highness of Bavaria, and binds himself, if, from enmity to this protestation and to the present alliance, the said Electoral Highness or his States should be disturbed, or troubled, or attacked by any person whomsoever, to protect and support him with all his strength, if necessary, so that neither his said Electoral Highness nor his States shall be exposed to any danger or injury."

In addition to this, an immediate and considerable annual subsidy was to be employed in putting the Bavarian troops in readiness to take a part, if necessary, in the forthcoming war.

It will be observed, however, that France promised her aid to the Elector with reservations and restrictions. France did not bind herself to support his pretensions to the Austrian States; she did not even formally recognize their legitimacy; she merely

undertook to protect him against any danger to his own States which might be incurred in endeavouring to establish his claims, whether well or ill founded.

The distinction was fine, and perhaps not noticed at the time; but to the pettifogging mind of Fleury, nothing was trivial, and he availed himself of that distinction on several occasions, to justify his subsequent double-dealing.

During the years 1733 and 1734, military events were sufficiently favourable to France to render it unnecessary for her to have recourse to her German ally.

The reciprocal engagements of Bavaria and France, although suspected by all, remained, therefore, an official secret, and were still officially unknown when Fleury, in 1735, decided on being the first to propose a cessation of hostilities to the Emperor, and to sign preliminaries of peace, in the November of that year.

The preliminaries included, on the one side, the cession, by Duke Francis, son-in-law of Charles VI., of the duchies of Bar and Lorraine to Stanislas Leczinski, father-in-law of Louis XV., with reversion at his death to the crown of France; and on the other, the formal adhesion of France to the Pragmatic Sanction.

It is only fair to acknowledge that there never was a more sensible or patriotic act, or one more honourable to a minister, than the initiative then so resolutely taken by Fleury. The war, it is true, had been favourable to the French arms, but their success had been principally due to the neutrality in which the clever Cardinal had contrived to keep

England and Holland, thus preserving the coast and northern frontiers of France from all danger of attack. But this abstention could not last; jealousy, aroused by her success, might move her ancient rival, and the struggle become complicated by prolongation. Moreover, nothing could have been better contrived than the dual stipulation on which peace was arranged; in bartering her guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction against the cession of Lorraine, France was gaining much and was, in fact, giving nothing. She was giving nothing, because the Pragmatic Sanction merely ensured the continuance of a territorial *status quo* in Europe that was altogether in her favour; it was the confirmation of the state of things established by the Peace of Westphalia as the reward of our victories, and still further improved by an unexpected stroke of good fortune at the peace of Utrecht in spite of our reverses. France was gaining much, for it was an inestimable advantage to acquire the wealthy province of Lorraine, which made us masters of all the passes of the Vosges, and, uniting our territory to that of our recently acquired Alsace, pushed our frontiers on that side as far as the Rhine. Now, when we have lost it, or lost the greater part of it, we recognize only too clearly the value of that acquisition. Such a cession could only have been obtained from the Duke of Lorraine by his father-in-law, Charles VI., and with the view of ensuring the integrity of his inheritance; it would be difficult to obtain a higher price for the satisfaction of conjugal and paternal affection. Therefore, when, at a later period, Belle-Isle and his party

accused Fleury of hesitating to take advantage of the fortunate circumstance that Austria had no male heirs, if the aged prelate's firmness had equalled his judgment, he might have contented himself with replying, that he had reaped every possible advantage that could have been anticipated by the highest wisdom from the very act for which they blamed him.

But it is not the less true that adhesion to the Pragmatic Sanction (though an eminently patriotic and wise measure) placed the French Government in a very delicate position with regard to the Elector of Bavaria, towards whom special obligations had been laid upon France by the clandestine arrangements just quoted. How was the public guarantee given on behalf of the succession of the daughter of Charles VI., to be reconciled with the secret support promised to the conflicting interests of the Elector? The question was an important one; for however convinced Fleury might be of the service he was rendering his country, in making peace on such conditions—with whatever complacence he might naturally regard his own work—he could not carelessly break with an ancient ally of France, a near kinsman of the King, and one whose aid might yet, at some future time, be very precious. He must have feared, above all, to afford a pretext for accusation to all his enemies at Court, and to all the ambitious who aspired to take his place.

In order to escape this difficulty, and to avoid offence to an ancient ally, without endangering the new alliance, Fleury at once introduced the reservation we have already explained, which consisted in

excluding from the promised guarantee everything that might do injury to undoubted rights previously acquired by third parties. By means of that reservation he might say to the Elector, that, provided his rights were of this nature, and that he could prove them, the adhesion of France to the Pragmatic Sanction could not affect them prejudicially. But as, on the other hand, he had abstained from pronouncing an opinion on the legitimacy of the Elector's pretensions, he might, at the same time, without being absolutely untruthful, assure the Emperor of his sincere intention of holding France to her new engagements. He might say to the Elector, "When you have proved your rights, I will respect them," and if the Emperor, becoming anxious and suspicious, should interrogate him, he might reply, "France recognizes no rights but those founded on the Pragmatic Sanction," adding either aloud or aside, "so long as no proofs to the contrary are advanced."

We must now examine the art with which he contrived, for many years, to sustain this ambiguous position founded entirely on a mental reservation and a quibble.

It was he who, at the outset, took the initiative, and on November 4, 1735, informed the Elector of the nature of the suspected, but not yet known, preliminaries that he had just signed; but, in so doing, he expressed himself in terms which conveyed the impression that, although to outward appearance he was abandoning Bavaria, he would still contrive to come to her aid in some secret manner. "The King," he writes, in an autograph letter, "would

have willingly avoided guaranteeing the Pragmatic Sanction, but how was it possible to decline to do so, when all the powers of Europe, including even the States General, have pronounced in its favour as being the basis of peace? If," he adds, "your Electoral Highness has not been mentioned in the preliminary articles, it has certainly been neither from neglect nor indifference, but only from fear of intensifying the suspicions of the Court of Vienna concerning you, and of giving that haughty Court an opportunity of expatiating severely on the subject, as it has already done, perhaps overmuch. . . . His Majesty has thought it well to communicate these observations to your Electoral Highness in strict confidence, that, being thus informed of the state of the case, you may judge for yourself as to the measures we should take in furtherance of your interests, which are not less dear to the King than his own. His Majesty will support them with the greatest eagerness, and feels strongly that his honour, his fame, and still more his tender affection for your Electoral Highness, require that nothing shall be omitted which may sustain—even by all possible means—the lustre of your house and the distinguished esteem in which it has long been held in Europe." [2]

The Elector was more irritated at the news, than pleased with these comments, and he replied at once very warmly.

"I did not expect," he writes, "that the same person, who has so often assured me of the friend-

[2] Fleury to the Elector of Bavaria, November 4, 1735. (*Correspondance de Bavière.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ship and the inviolable faith of his Most Christian Majesty, should one day inform me that, notwithstanding so many sacred engagements, that great prince is on the point of forsaking me. . . . Who could believe that a great and powerful king, in the midst of victory and prosperity, should be reduced to the necessity of allowing an enemy at bay to impose an unjust law upon him? The public, which is a witness of the superiority of his Most Christian Majesty, certainly does not consider him to be pressed by such a hard necessity, and what will it think when it sees him forsaking a prince who has risked everything to prove his inviolable attachment to the Crown of France? It will say, doubtless, as was said in Vienna and elsewhere on the first news of the preliminaries of peace, that what is happening to me, is only that which was so often predicted to me, and which I would not believe, that France sacrifices her friends and allies when she no longer needs them, and when it seems to suit her own selfish ends. Was I to distrust the sacred word of so just a king, and the good faith of an honourable and upright minister?"

He then recalls, and is the first to do so, the repeated affirmations of the Emperor, that the Pragmatic Sanction would be prejudicial to no one, and asks the Cardinal the direct question, why, before signing the peace, France did not exact an inquiry into the known claims of the House of Bavaria.

"I know enough of the rulers of the Court of Vienna," he adds, "to be certain that the only way to prevent them expressing themselves harshly as regards me, would be to make them understand

plainly, that the Most Christian King, being unwilling to wrong any one, and knowing that the House of Bavaria had solemnly protested against the guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction, as contrary to its just rights and legitimate pretensions—could not in justice guarantee the said sanction without examination of the claims of the House of Bavaria; instead of which, by showing the Court of Vienna (to whom it was certainly unexpected), that his Most Christian Majesty takes no interest in my concerns, and does not give me a thought in the most important crisis of my life, he has taken a course which will encourage that Court to treat me harshly."

He concludes by asking what can be the meaning of the assurances of good will and interest that are offered him? "Can his Majesty on one side promise to augment the lustre of my house, and on the other contemplate effacing it for ever? Could he with one hand offer me his royal heart, and with the other a poignard?"[3]

In Fleury's reply, dated the 7th of December of the same year, he shows himself somewhat touched by the reproaches of the Elector, but eager at the same time, to profit by the opportunity in order to establish at once the new ground on which he intended taking his stand. . . . "I beg of your Electoral Highness," he writes, "to recollect our essential reasons for concluding, and from the moment our hand was forced, necessity, as the saying is, has no law. Your Electoral Highness reproaches us, with not even naming you in the

[3] The Elector of Bavaria to Fleury, November 24, 1735. (*Correspondance de Bavière.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

preliminary articles, thereby denoting complete abandonment. But I implore you to weigh the reasons that prevented us. The Emperor and the Empire suspected that we had entered into a secret alliance with your Highness, not only as to neutrality, but even to have it declared offensively if the occasion arose. You had denied this formally, and so had we. The matter in hand was to make peace between the belligerent powers, and if we had proposed to include your Highness's name, it would have been tacitly owning that your Highness was of the number of those powers, and at least we must either have clearly explained our agreement with your Highness, or increased suspicion by refusing an explanation. It is true that when you declined to give your adhesion to the Pragmatic Sanction, you declared that you had incontestable rights to the succession of the Emperor; but you never explained them, and they were not proved. . . . Under these circumstances, it would have been exposing your Electoral Highness to finding your claims set aside for contradictory reasons, because of the unfavourable disposition towards you that exists. . . . If we had proposed the discussion as a preliminary, the Emperor would never have consented to it, and we should have found our negotiation, which did not admit of delay, upset at the very outset. *Our silence, however, is in no degree prejudicial to your claims*, and you will always be enabled to bring them forward as opportunities may arise."[1]

The Elector was in some measure reassured by

[1] Fleury to the Elector, December 7, 1735. (*Correspondance de Bavière.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

these marks of interest, or, at any rate, as he had little help to expect except from France, he thought his wisest course was to rely upon her, and to try and bind her to her words. "As I can reckon," he writes on January 22, 1736, "on the protection of the King, the future is no longer dark and clouded for me, and I discern new rays of hope in it."

Then in order to put France to the test at once, he announced his intention of addressing the Emperor once more in a protest against any prejudicial treatment of his claims, and he sent the draft to Fleury, for his advice upon the terms in which the protest should be couched, thus indirectly associating him, whether he would or no, with that action.[5]

The trap was too obvious. Fleury was not disposed to fall into it: nothing could suit his purpose less than such, and the excitement it would occasion on becoming known in the midst of the difficult, complicated, and captious negotiations (they lasted three years) that he was carrying on at Vienna, in order to convert the preliminaries already signed into a final treaty. He, therefore, employed every effort to dissuade the Elector from taking so undesirable, and, according to Fleury, so inopportune a step.

It would have embarrassed him the more, because he was just then closely watched by the agent whom the Emperor—anxious concerning the possible relations between France and Bavaria—had despatched to Paris, immediately after the preliminaries

[5] The Elector to Fleury, January 19 and 26, 1736. (*Correspondance de Bavière.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

were signed, to re-establish regular diplomatic intercourse while awaiting the conclusion of the treaty. That Fleury was not ignorant of the suspicions entertained concerning him in that quarter, is proved by one of the volumes of the correspondence with Vienna, in which we find the instructions given by the Austrian Cabinet to M. de Schmerling, the agent in question. This was a confidential document, and must have been intercepted, or it could not have been included in the French collection. Thus it must have come under the notice of the Cardinal himself.

"As the principal object of our negotiation," writes the Austrian Cabinet to its envoy, "should be to carry the point of the guarantee, and as by reason of its great importance it is necessary to act with all possible circumspection, and in order to that end to take every imaginable precaution; and that, moreover, it is known to all Europe how close has been the union of the Court of Bavaria with that of France, from which the former has received considerable subsidies, that have enabled it to raise a large body of troops which have caused dangerous results to his Imperial Majesty, and will be counted to its eternal merit by the Crown of France—we may therefore presume and justly fear under these circumstances, that either that Court has already secretly given to the House of Bavaria solemn assurances contrary to the urgent negotiation, or that in case of a change of ministry in France, and especially in case of the death of the Cardinal, the said House may renew its ancient harmony and secret understanding with France.

M. de Schmerling will propose to the Cardinal, that as his Most Christian Majesty had been pleased, in order to prevent dangers and troubles that might arise after the decease of his Imperial Majesty, with regard to the succession to his States—to guarantee *contra quoscumque* the order of succession established in the Archducal House, it was hoped that the King would make no difficulty about undertaking also the same guarantee (which he had himself first offered to do), by a separate and secret article especially against the House of Bavaria: this was the more expected, as it was precisely the said House which, by reason of its alleged rights in default of male succession in the Archducal House, would cause the greatest troubles. . . . If against all expectation, the Cardinal should make any difficulty about this proposition, and that he should not agree to this secret article, M. de Schmerling will represent, although with all possible moderation, that the Crown of France, having agreed to the guarantee *contra quoscumque*, had also agreed to it against the House of Bavaria, and consequently might act upon it against that House in particular; that in case of refusal on the part of the Crown of France, his Imperial Majesty must naturally infer that France had never had any serious intention of fulfiling the guarantee, *contra quoscumque* when the case should arise." [6]

Singular to relate, the above document, wherein the rights of the House of Austria are so strongly

[6] Instructions from the Court of Vienna to M. de Schmerling, November 25, 1735. (*Correspondance de Vienne*—Supplement.) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

and categorically maintained, ends with an unexpected concession, which confirms what I have said of the uncertainty and strangeness of German jurisprudence in matters of succession and diplomatic guarantees.

"M. de Schmerling will take the opportunity," continues the Austrian minister, "of representing to the said Cardinal that his Imperial Majesty would never be for depriving the House of Bavaria of the means of producing and defending its alleged claims, his Imperial Majesty aforesaid, having on the contrary the intention of affording to the said House of Bavaria, *every satisfaction that may be justly claimed if its rights and pretensions prove to be well founded*, and of renewing the ancient harmony and neighbourliness existing between them . . . . that in order positively to confirm all this, his Imperial Majesty was willing that the *alleged rights of the House of Bavaria should be examined conjointly with France*, although, on no account before the peace; his Imperial Majesty offers, moreover, to enter, according to circumstances, into special negotiations with the Court of Bavaria, and besides this, to do all that can contribute to remove the distrust that has existed between the two Courts."

Notwithstanding this promise, which partly justified his reservations, we can understand how much embarrassed the Cardinal must have felt at finding himself hampered between a formal demand on the part of the Emperor, that Bavaria should be specially included among the pretenders named in the guarantee, and a no less formal protest by the Elector,

handed to him at the same moment. Had such a complication taken place before the signature of the definitive treaty, it would infallibly have interfered with its conclusion.

Fleury, however, far from being disturbed, found an additional reason in the threatened representations of Austria, for dissuading the Elector from his proposed protest. "M. de Schmerling," he writes, "has informed me that your Electoral Highness, together with the two Electors of his House (the Elector Palatine and the Archbishop of Cologne) will protest against the Pragmatic Sanction, but that his Court was in no wise perplexed by it, and could not but turn against you. *He added, that it was as much our affair as the Emperor's*, since it would be an attack on the adhesion to the Pragmatic Sanction, to which we are pledged, and consequently on the preliminaries also. I simply replied that we had no cognizance of the alleged information, and were absolutely ignorant of your Electoral Highness's intentions, that we had never had the smallest notion of your claims, and that I could assure him of this, *as it is most true*. He told me it was known at Vienna that they were founded on the will of Ferdinand I., brother to Charles V., which signified nothing, and I did not press him to explain it to me, in order to avoid a more entire clearing-up, and giving him an opportunity of explaining the express guarantee that he might wish to demand of us against the rights of your Electoral Highness, who can judge from this how greatly we should be embarrassed by your letter to the Emperor, and I take the

liberty of telling your Highness, that I think it would also be very prejudicial to your own interests; for should it be placed before the Diet, there is hardly a doubt but that the plurality of votes would be in favour of the Emperor, and it is far better that no judgment should be pronounced until a more favourable opportunity shall arise, which may present itself at a later period." [1]

Was the Elector convinced, or was he simply disheartened by an attitude which forbade him to reckon on the ostensible support of France? At any rate, he renounced his intention to protest, wishing, as he said, to show deference to the King unto the end, and even promising to abstain from all opposition to the preliminaries of peace, should that act be submitted to the deliberations of the Diet. But in return for this proof of deference, he said he had strong hopes, that immediately on peace being concluded, the King would approve of his claiming his rights, with all the publicity and authority requisite for obtaining them.

Fleury now breathed freely, and as M. de Schmerling had not, on his part, insisted on the distinct nomination of Bavaria in the article of the guarantee, he was able to resume his negotiations in peace. This respite, it is true, was not of long duration, for the dissensions in Vienna were unexpectedly prolonged by difficulties of all sorts (foreign to the question of the guarantee, and relating principally to territorial arrangements in Italy); the Elector lost patience, and towards the beginning of 1737, he decided on sending his favourite minister,

[1] Fleury to the Elector, May 28, 1736.

Marshal Torring, to Paris, on the pretext of private business.

Torring's mission was to obtain information respecting the nature of the relations established between the courts of Versailles and Vienna, whose increasing friendship could not fail to create uneasiness at Munich. He passed several months in observations, and only in October of the same year did he resolve on speaking directly to the Cardinal on the subject of his master's claims. At the same moment, by a coincidence that was natural enough, the Emperor took offence at the prolonged residence of a Bavarian minister in France, and expressed his surprise in a private letter to Fleury. "I doubt not," he wrote, "that your Paternity, with habitual prudence, has gathered from Count Torring's language, or rather from the complaints he has made to you, what are the actual intentions of his master." [8]

The Cardinal, who once more found himself pressed by opposing interests, took refuge on this occasion in frankness. It was, however, more apparent than real, but its simulation was a clever bit of policy. He gave the Emperor an account of his interview with Count Torring, modifying, no doubt, but not absolutely falsifying his own part in the conversation.

"With regard to the Elector of Bavaria," he writes in a letter, addressed directly to Charles VI., on October 12, "I should have naturally expected that Count Torring, having been here for several

[8] Charles VI. to Fleury, September, 1737. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

months, would have informed me distinctly as to the real reason of his visit, after the first conference we held on his arrival, when the conversation turned merely in general terms on his master's confidence in the friendship of the King. But he only entered further into the matter a week ago. Neither he nor I had asked for the interview. On Monday last, he came with Prince Grimberghe, while I was with M. Amelot, and began with a preamble about what had hitherto prevented him from speaking to me; the following is, in short, the substance of his communication. He said that his master the Elector had incontrovertible rights to the succession of your Majesty, founded on express clauses in the marriage contract of the Princess Anne, daughter of the Emperor Ferdinand, in which it was settled, that in default of male heirs in the imperial branch, that princess should be called to, and should enjoy all the possessions belonging to the inheritance of Ferdinand, to the prejudice of any daughters of his in the direct line; that Charles V. had confirmed this family compact, and that Ferdinand II. had again confirmed it, at the marriage, I think, of one of his daughters with an Elector of Bavaria. He added, that the right of representation in favour of the Princess Anne formed part of the Germanic laws, and was admitted by the best lawyers of Germany. I replied that I had nothing precise to allege against facts or against laws if they were formal, but that it seemed to me contrary to custom and to natural rights, to prefer the daughters who, through a marriage of ancient date, had become strangers to the House

of Austria, to the daughters proceeding in direct line from the Emperor Ferdinand, and I offered several remarks on a law which to me seemed so singular. To these he replied according to his own prejudices. . . . The above is the substance of a conversation that lasted three-quarters of an hour, and I cannot even pledge myself that some circumstances may not have escaped my memory through the difficulty of recalling them in detail. I concluded the conference by telling Count Torring that it would be impossible for me to pronounce any opinion on general allegations, without seeing the documents on which they were founded, and he replied that he was preparing a memorandum in which all the documents would be quoted, and on whose accuracy I might depend. I asked him whether I might have the honour of communicating it to your Majesty. He replied, that he believed so, but that he had not yet received final orders from the Elector his master."

A few days after this, Fleury narrates a conversation of the same nature, that had taken place between Count Torring and Amelot.

"You have here, sire, the substance and the results of our conference, and you see the point we have reached It would be very difficult for me to express an opinion, having only heard one side, but I cannot conceal from your Majesty that I have been struck by some of the points in Count Torring's argument. These are the authority of renowned lawyers, and the stipulations of the marriage contract of the Archduchess, daughter of Ferdinand I., which in the copies he handed me seem very explicit.

I am far from drawing conclusions in his favour, and it would be presumptuous in me to think of so doing, but if your Majesty will allow me to have the honour of expressing an opinion, I think that there is, at least, something serious and apparent in what Count Torring advanced, and that it would be to your Majesty's advantage and interest to permit the question to be thoroughly sifted. It is one of the greatest importance, and I will content myself with the account I have had the honour to lay before your Majesty, until I have received orders as to the steps your Majesty thinks proper to take."[9]

It must be owned that the latter phrases were cleverly turned, so as to warn the Emperor without giving offence, that if the claims of the House of Bavaria were justified, or even not directly refuted, the rights recognized and guaranteed by the Pragmatic Sanction, would be, on that very account, seriously endangered. The Emperor's timid and embarrassed reply is, therefore, all the more curious and significant. Far from exclaiming against what he might even then have called a want of faith, he himself, on the contrary, offers explanations. It is clear that, without explicitly owning it, he feels the force of the objection.

"As to what concerns the Elector of Bavaria," he writes in a letter of December 12, "I will explain everything in a private letter which will be conveyed by the bearer of this one, or, which will, should time fail me, speedily follow it, for I can easily see by the contents of your Eminence's second

[9] Fleury to Charles VI. October 12, December 12, 1737. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

letter, that Count Torring has sedulously endeavoured to disguise the real state of the case from your Eminence, by interpolations that have nothing to do with it. But as the German customs are not equally well-known to foreigners, it will be well to explain the whole business with exactness. This could have been done more easily had a copy of Count Torring's paper been forwarded to me."[1]

What can have been Fleury's design, in inviting Count Torring on the one hand, to make the basis of the Bavarian claims known to him in detail, and with documentary evidence, and on the other, asking the Emperor to communicate his reply to him after he should have made himself acquainted with the memorandum containing all those particulars? Did he seriously entertain the idea of making himself supreme arbiter, and deciding a question on which the sovereignty of nearly one-half of Europe depended?

This would have been arrogant and ideal to a degree incompatible with a practical mind, which was not in the habit of aiming too high or forming chimerical projects. It is more probable that, having given both parties an opportunity of stating their case to him, and finding that neither of the two—the Emperor in particular—was willing to defer to his arbitration, Fleury intended to avail himself of the proposal and the refusal to declare himself more ignorant than ever of the rights of the matter, and so to be free to espouse whichever cause he should consider the just one. He

[1] Charles VI. to Fleury, December 2, 1737. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

may have hoped, also, that the Emperor—having been made aware that he must not absolutely rely on the guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction, and feeling uneasy at Fleury's attitude—would decide on entering into negotiations with the Elector, and would contrive, by some territorial concession, to make him withdraw his claims; thus ending the disagreement to the satisfaction of all, and relieving France from difficulty.

For this twofold end, to retain freedom of action for himself towards either party, and to promote the reconciliation, we find Fleury manœuvring during the two years that elapsed between the signature of the peace, in 1738, and the death of Charles VI., and this is particularly evident in the instructions given, both to the Marquis de Mirepoix, French ambassador at Vienna in February, 1738, for the definitive conclusion of the treaty, and to M. de Lanoue, who was accredited at the same period to the Diet of Ratisbon.

M. de Mirepoix was to pass through Munich on his way to Vienna, and the Elector could not fail to converse with him concerning his claims, and endeavour to enlist him in his cause, by an affected display of confidence and friendship.

"The Elector," writes the ambassador, January 9, 1733, "expressed to me his attachment towards the King's person: these are his own words. The conversation, although long, turned only on general subjects. He merely asked me if I knew the object of M. Torring's mission, to which I replied that I had not been informed of it, and that my only instructions were to express the sentiments entertained

by the King towards his Electoral Highness and his House. He added that I should hear them spoken of at Vienna. He had instructed M. de la Pérouse, his ambassador-extraordinary at that Court, to inform me of everything, and to enter into the closest correspondence with me. It would be for me to decide on the frequency of our interviews, and on the exterior marks of our intimacy, for he desired in all things to conform to the wishes of the King, neither doing nor saying aught except what might be pleasing to his Majesty, and referring to him also the disposal of his claims. He told me too that he was very glad to have seen me, so that it might be known at Vienna that the King had not completely forgotten him. The Elector's manner, while declaring his sentiments towards the King, was yet more expressive than the words, I have the honour, sir, of repeating to you."[2]

The Cardinal was somewhat alarmed at advances that might be compromising, and a letter was immediately written to the ambassador, directing him not to receive them too openly. "The King has observed with pleasure," writes Amelot, "in your account of your conversation with the Elector, evidence of the increasing attachment of that prince to his Majesty. The interests of his Electoral Highness will always be dear to the King, who will not fail to give him proofs of friendship and protection on every occasion. You are not ignorant, however, how greatly his claims are opposed to the views of the Emperor. Under present circumstances

[2] The Marquis de Mirepoix to Amelot, January 3, 1738. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

it would not be advisable that your friendship with M. de la Pérouse should be too marked, nor your conferences with him too frequent, so as to give umbrage or cause jealousy to his Imperial Majesty; *besides this, the rights of his Electoral Highness have not yet been made clear*, but present conjectures do not require that the King should declare himself with respect to his intention of supporting them. Therefore you will not act in any way on what may be told you by M. de la Pérouse, until the King has made known his intentions to you." [3]

A similarly circumspect course of action is enjoined a few months later upon the envoy accredited by France, according to custom, to the Diet then about to open at Ratisbon, and which had to ratify in the name of the Emperor, all the arrangements resulting from the treaty concluded between France and Austria.

"The guarantee given by his Majesty," so run the envoy's instructions, "is so great an advantage to the House of Austria, that in all probability the Emperor's ministers will endeavour to profit by it, either to complete the union of the Empire, in the same views, or to use it as a means of positively securing the crown to the prince who inherits the rights of the eldest of the archduchesses. The Sieur de Lanoue is not unaware that the Elector of Bavaria and the Elector Palatine have not joined in the guarantee given by the rest of the Empire to the Imperial Pragmatic Sanction, and that the

[3] The Marquis de Mirepoix to Amelot, January 9, 1738. Amelot to the Marquis de Mirepoix, February 2, 1738. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

former, in particular, claiming to have rights to the States whose destiny is fixed by the Pragmatic Sanction, will be stronger than others in his protest against the guarantee, so that his ministers, whether at Ratisbon or elsewhere, will be looked upon by the Imperialists as ministers of a power hostile to the House of Austria, with which the Court of Vienna may perhaps desire that M. de Lanoue shall have no kind of correspondence. For this reason the King's minister must not display publicly, nor with ostentation, any intimacy which might be displeasing to the court of Vienna; but neither would it be wise for him to avoid all contact with the ministers of the Electors who are opposed to the Pragmatic Sanction, nor that he should show any partiality against the rights of the House of Bavaria, to whom the King is bound by every kind of tie of friendship and affection, all the more because *one of the bases laid down in the Pragmatic Sanction being that it injured no one*, if the Elector of Bavaria had really ancient rights contrary to the dispositions of the act of succession, his Majesty would not think it just to contribute directly or indirectly to the real prejudice that would be done to a prince who is not only connected with him by ties of blood, but who has always shown a personal and marked affection towards him and the interests of his Crown.

"The Sieur de Lanoue must, in general, so far as may be without affectation, avoid speaking on this delicate matter, especially so long as the validity or invalidity of the pretensions of the House of Bavaria remains wholly or in part undecided.

"But should the ministers or the partisans of the Court of Vienna enter on the subject with the Sieur de Lanoue, he will simply reply that his Majesty's entire fidelity to his engagements may be relied upon; that he, M. de Lanoue, is in ignorance of the rights or claims of the House of Bavaria, but that if they are well founded, there is no true friend of the great House of Austria, who would not advise the Court of Vienna to remove such a stumbling-block by some amicable arrangement; thus the Sieur de Lanoue will appear to have had nothing but the tranquillity of the Emperor's family in view; when the case of the Pragmatic Sanction comes on."[4]

The two ambassadors found little difficulty in following out their instructions. As the treaty of peace was not submitted to the Diet (an omission that Fleury at a subsequent period enumerated among his grievances), M. de Lanoue could readily avoid compromising himself. As for the Marquis de Mirepoix, he endeavoured, but not very urgently, to obtain the memorandum concerning the claims of the House of Bavaria, either from the Emperor or from his minister Bartenstein. It was several times promised to him, but as often delayed on various pretexts. It is evident that the Emperor, when about to fulfil his promise, hesitated to take a step which too clearly threw a doubt on the rights of his beloved daughter, and might cause the future fortunes of his House to depend on the verdict given

[4] Instructions to the Sieur de Lanoue, May 1, 1738. (*Correspondance de l'Ambassade à Ratisbonne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

on a very abstruse point of law by an ancient enemy, now become a doubtful ally, and an arbitration as unsafe as it was incompetent. Fleury, who, to all appearance, had never seriously expected a token of confidence of which he felt somewhat undeserving, merely protested sufficiently against the successive delays to establish his own liberty of action. He took the opportunity, at the same time, of hinting at his views respecting a settlement.

"I had the honour," he writes to the Emperor, on October 22, 1738, "to inform you, seven or eight months ago, of what I had learned from the Elector respecting those rights to the succession of your Majesty, which he believes himself to possess. . . . Your Majesty did me the honour to reply that you would immediately forward me authentic documents, subversive of all the claims made by the Elector. I communicated this to the Elector's envoy, who has continually recurred to the subject, and draws conclusions from the delay, favourable to his master's claims. He has since given me copies of the will of Ferdinand I., and of some clauses taken from the marriage contracts of the Most Serene Archduchesses; but I am not in a position to make any conclusive reply, and I explain that the important affairs occupying your Majesty have prevented the fulfilment of that expressed intention; but your Majesty will admit that in time this excuse loses its force. I do not think your Majesty can distrust either my prudence or my intentions. I entreat then, with all earnestness, that I may be furnished with weapons for the defence of your Majesty's rights, and I must add that I have been informed

of consultations which seem favourable to the Elector. I am very far from deciding on any question on the representations of one side only, and your Majesty will see I was not prejudiced in favour of the pretensions of the House of Bavaria. I should be glad to be able to speak on the subject with better knowledge of the case, but I cannot unless your Majesty has the kindness to help me. It is not for me to penetrate into the secret views of your Majesty, nor to give an opinion as to your Majesty's real interests. But I may be permitted, nevertheless, to point out, that if it were thought well to attach the Elector of Bavaria to your Majesty by some equivalent (*dédommagement*), supposing the case to deserve one, it would be a great step towards removing differences that may disturb the harmonious relations between your Majesty and the Electoral College, and even your Majesty's relations with the Diet. In taking the liberty of advancing this, I can be suspected of no interest other than that of the public tranquillity, and even the interests of your Majesty. I have reached an advanced age, and I should die happy could I have the consolation of strengthening the links of an alliance so desirable for Europe, and for the common interests of the two Crowns." [5]

In the same letter he added that (doubtless in order to prepare for so desirable an arrangement), he had joined in advising the Elector of Bavaria to fulfil his duties as a Prince of the Empire, by furnishing a contingent to the Austrian army, for the war which Charles VI. was waging against the Turks.

[5] Fleury to Charles VI., October 22, 1738. (*Correspondance de Vienne.*) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He did not, indeed, explain that he had only obtained that act of deference from the Elector to his Suzerain on conditions with which the Emperor would have been but moderately pleased. These were the renewal, for a further term of three years, of the annual subsidy granted to the Elector for the support of his troops, and at the same time, the confirmation, by a new engagement (signed May 16, 1738), of all the obligations imposed by earlier treaties.

The proposal of coming to terms through the mediation of France (by consenting, that is to say, to a dismemberment of the Austrian States) was not more palatable to the Emperor than that of pleading his cause before the French minister, and thenceforward neither plan was again mentioned between them. Prince von Lichtenstein, ambassador to Paris, was authorized merely to give some explanation in general terms on the points of law advanced by the Emperor, and to allow the French ministers to take notes of these, but to leave no written document in their hands. We learn this by a letter from Charles VI., written on Sept. 30, 1740, a few days before his death. Thus, at the time of that unexpected event, the question that was about to be put to Europe had not advanced one step towards a definitive solution.

From the above statement it is clear that on the accession of Maria Theresa, France would have been strictly within her right in postponing the recognition of the princess until the pretensions of Bavaria had been examined, either by a European congress, or by the German Diet as the Elector had

frequently requested; and, supposing them to have been recognized as just, the stipulated guarantee in favour of the Pragmatic Sanction would naturally have shared the fate of the Pragmatic Sanction itself. It remains to be proved, however, whether the entire treaty of 1738 would not thus have been called in question, and whether France, in repudiating its claims upon her, could have retained its benefits, particularly with respect to the return of Lorraine to the crown.

But such was not, we know, the line of conduct adopted by Fleury. Not only did he take no step after the death of Charles VI., nor endeavour by any means to submit the claims of the Elector of Bavaria to regular examination, but he hastened to recognize the regal title of Maria Theresa, thereby excluding the pretensions of those princes who contested it. After having thus made an open act of adhesion to the order of succession as settled by the Pragmatic Sanction, and inspired the young Queen with a false sense of security in his intentions, he allowed himself to be persuaded to enter into negotiations with the invader of her states. He consented to support the King of Prussia in a claim that had no basis whatever, and which he might have made the object of an indirect reservation. No subtlety can justify a breach of faith as contrary to the law of nations as it is to natural equity.

Finally, and in order to give some idea of the state of mind of a part of the French court at this critical moment, I will transcribe here a confidential letter written by Marshal Belle-Isle, the day after the death of Charles VI., which is included in the

Bavarian correspondence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*Autograph Letter from M. de Belle-Isle of Bizy, to an unknown Correspondent at Munich (probably Count Torring).*

"*November* 11, 1740.

"You will not doubt, my dear Count, that I anticipated all you do me the honour to tell me in your letter, which I received two days ago from Paris, where your courier had delivered it. Immediately on hearing of the death of the Emperor, my thoughts followed my inclinations and turned towards the Elector. You know how I feel towards him personally; you know my esteem and respect for his great qualities, and my gratitude for the infinite kindness shown me by the late Elector, his father. To these reasons, both general and particular, I add the interests and renown of the King, the welfare of the monarchy, and the universal wishes of the nation. You have given me particulars with which I was unacquainted, of the rights of the Elector over a part of the states forming the Emperor's succession. This knowledge of the justice of his cause convinces me that the Cardinal, who is not less well informed, will give all the attention demanded by circumstances so important, and which must have such essential and decisive influence. But it is quite possible he may not hurry himself, and as the engagements entered into by the King, with regard to the Pragmatic Sanction, require the greatest consideration, I think he will try to gain time, but I cannot believe that he will not

at last do for the Elector all that the circumstances require. (*Here an illegible word occurs.*) As for myself, I can tell you nothing at present, either new or interesting. I am at my country place, from which I cannot stir, nor do I wish to do so, until after the King's return to Versailles. You may be assured that, as I regard the interests of the King and the Elector as uniform, I shall co-operate, so far as depends on me, in carrying out those things which shall be decided upon, if, as I hope, some portion of them be entrusted to me, but until then you know I can do nothing. I shall wait with as much zeal and impatience as yourself, for a decision to be come to that shall be agreeable and useful to the Elector, and all my wishes tend to that. . . . Time is precious; I beg you to let me hear from you, by the safe way; to assure the Elector of my profound respect, and of what you know of my attachment to his person, and I shall consider myself the most fortunate man in the world, if, when the King has decided on his line of action, I may be enabled to give his Highness efficacious and useful proofs of my sentiments."

## C.

### Relations between the French Embassy and Voltaire during his first visit to Berlin.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

Amelot to the Marquis de Valori.

"*June* 14, 1740.

"There is no doubt that you will soon have M. de Voltaire at Berlin, and that he will be made much of. It is possible that personal acquaintance may not increase either liking or esteem for him. However, one cannot tell to what extent the man of letters may prevail over the prince (in Frederick); so that, without appearing to be acting under orders, it would be well that, as if from yourself, you should show some attention to M. de Voltaire, so that you may have a right to make use of him should the occasion and the need arise. . . ."

Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

The Marquis de Valori to Amelot.

"*June* 21, 1740.

"I had received this very morning a letter from M. de Voltaire, whom I have not the honour of knowing . . . . but some gossip of which I can discover neither the origin nor the meaning, had

influenced him against me . . . . I can only congratulate myself on the manner in which he received my explanation. I sent it through his niece, the wife of a commissary of war at Lille. I could not suffer a friend of the Prince Royal's (for he is known to be such, monseigneur) to have to complain of me. He did me the honour to write me the civilest possible letter, and I know that he has done more than this; he wrote everything he could to the King of Prussia to inspire him with esteem for me. Among other things, after having told me how much he wished to witness the coronation of the King of Prussia and of his triumphs, all foregone conclusions with him; 'it would be,' he says, 'a great happiness to me to be with his Majesty, but I cannot forsake friends for kings, and must therefore content myself with the most ardent wishes.'

"The instructions you do me the honour to send, put me quite at my ease, for I did not imagine M. de Voltaire to be unpersuadable. I thought he might make up his mind to come to Berlin. I thought of offering him rooms in my house, feeling he might be of some use to me, but I did not know whether you would approve. I have written him a most pressing letter, but it is not my letter that will decide him. I know that the King of Prussia has himself written to him an account of the progress of the illness, and even of the death of the King his father. It is not impossible that M. de Voltaire's presence may somewhat lessen the Prince's great notion of him.

"I hear that savants of all sorts are to be invited

to Berlin, and that the celebrated M. Wolff will be strongly urged to come."

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

THE MARQUIS DE VALORI TO AMELOT.

"*November* 1, 1740.

"M. de Voltaire has announced his arrival at Berlin in a letter to M. Algarotti in the following terms. 'Madame du Châtelet is at Fontainebleau, Marcus Aurelius at Charlottenburg, the Swan of Padua is there. Why should I not come and burn incense to the Muses in the loveliest retreat they possess on earth? I have the greatest wish to go and admire for a week, at least, that which I had only two days to admire at Moyland.' If I may believe M. Algarotti, he will feel very little admiration, and neither will he be greatly delighted with his journey. The King of Prussia was not pleased with his freedom of manner; he passed from adoration to a not over respectful familiarity in a very short time. It is my opinion, from what I hear of him, that if he prolongs his stay, he will not leave the Court of Berlin without having given some offence or encountered something disagreeable."

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

THE MARQUIS DE VALORI TO AMELOT.

"*November* 8, 1740.

"The *Anti-Machiavel* is in circulation. It is be-

lieved that Voltaire has had a hand in it. Some persons find great fault with it, and, in particular, that nations and ruling powers are spoken of indiscreetly and without discrimination. Others look upon it as the work of a schoolboy in moral science and politics, wanting to display fine sentiments that he was not aware he should have to get rid of on changing his condition. . . . In general, the chief merit of the book is held to be that it has a king for its author."

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(*Correspondance de Prusse.*)

THE MARQUIS DE VALORI TO AMELOT.

"*November* 29, 1740.

"M. de Voltaire has returned here from Rheinsberg, and will leave us again for Brussels on the 30th. The principal motive of his journey was business connected with the publication of the *Anti-Machiavel.* I have reason to believe that they parted little pleased with one another; I even think that pecuniary matters have something to do with their mutual dissatisfaction. There may have been some author's quarrel between them, in which the printer may count for something. Add to this, rivalry in verse-making, too much candour in the criticisms of M. de Voltaire when speaking to the King of Prussia, and you will readily understand they are not likely to get on well together. The King of Prussia runs after every kind of praise, and nothing vexes him so much as any stint of it."

## D.

### Text of the Treaty of Alliance between France and Prussia, concluded June 5, 1741.

As the text of the Treaty of June 5, 1741, is not included in any collection of documents, I think it well to reproduce it here as it appears in the *Correspondance de Prusse.* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs.)

*Treaty of June* 5, 1741.

"The Most Christian King, and the King of Prussia, having equally recognized how important it is, under present circumstances, for their common interests, and also for the maintenance and preservation of general tranquillity, that they should act with the most perfect intelligence, their Majesties, after having mutually communicated their ideas on the means of cementing union and amity, believing that they can do nothing better than to strengthen those ties by the conclusion of an offensive alliance between them, and his Most Christian Majesty having to that end authorized the Sieur Marquis de Valori, brigadier of his troops, and his Envoy Extraordinary to his Majesty the King of Prussia, and his Prussian Majesty having in like manner authorized the Sieur de Podewils his Minister of State and War, those persons having duly exchanged their respective credentials, have agreed on the following:—

ARTICLE 1.

"From this day forth, and for ever in the future, there shall be between his Most Christian Majesty and his Majesty the King of Prussia, their heirs and successors, kingdoms, countries and subjects, a sincere friendship and correspondence, which shall be observed in such manner that the contracting powers shall sincerely, and in good faith, do all that shall depend on them to procure and promote the welfare and advantage of the one and the other, and to avert all damage and prejudice that might arise to them and their said subjects.

ARTICLE 2.

"Their said Majesties promise and reciprocally undertake to enter into no convention or engagement which might, at any time, or in any measure, directly or indirectly, be contrary to the statutes of the Treaty of Peace, concluded at Stockholm, February 1, 1720, between the Crown of Sweden and the King of Prussia, but, on the contrary, to use every effort to procure its maintenance and execution.

ARTICLE 3.

"His Most Christian Majesty, and his Majesty the King of Prussia, guarantee reciprocally all their kingdoms, states, and domains in Europe, and if one or other of their said Majesties be attacked or troubled by any power or on any pretext whatever, the other promises and engages promptly to succour his ally, so as to procure for him just and sure satisfaction, by mediation and by the use of his

forces in war or aggression if needful. Their Majesties promise, in such case, not to lay down arms, to enter into any negotiation or agreement, unless by common consent to the reciprocal satisfaction of both parties.

ARTICLE 4.

"Their Majesties being equally interested in all that concerns the welfare and tranquillity of the Germanic body, whether within or without the empire, promise and engage to take counsel together, and to act with the utmost unity, in order to place on the Imperial throne, the prince most proper to maintain the prerogatives of the Princes of the Empire, and to promote all that may be most conducive to the stability of the general tranquillity.

ARTICLE 5.

"In case his Most Christian Majesty, and his Majesty the King of Prussia, should unanimously agree that in order to arrive with greater certainty at the accomplishment of the objects of the present treaty, it would be important to invite other princes to join in it, they shall invite in concert, and may likewise admit in concert, all those States who may desire to enter into it, for the maintenance of the tranquillity of the Empire and of the general tranquillity of Europe, and also for the common benefit of the parties interested.

ARTICLE 6.

"Finally, their said Majesties promise reciprocally to act with one accord for their common interests,

and henceforth to enter into no engagement relatively to the affairs of Germany or of the north, without having faithfully communicated to one another the propositions that may have been made to them, and after having inquired into all that may tend to the greater advantage of the one and the other.

ARTICLE 7.

"This treaty shall also for certain reasons be kept secret, and shall be communicated to no one whomsoever, except by a common accord and consent.

ARTICLE 8.

"The present treaty of defensive alliance shall last for the space of fifteen years, and ratifications of it shall be exchanged within the term of one month, reckoning from the date of signature. In faith of which, we the undersigned, ministers of his Most Christian Majesty and of his Prussian Majesty, in virtue of our respective offices, have signed the present treaty, and have affixed the seal of our arms. Done at Berlin, the 5th June, 1741.

"MARQUIS DE VALORI.—PODEWILS."

*Separate and Secret Articles.*

"His Most Christian Majesty being credibly informed that the Elector of Bavaria is threatened on all sides with the effects of the resentment of the Court of Vienna, on account of his having manifested his rights and claims to some of the States making a part of the succession of Austria, and

knowing that of himself he has not sufficient strength to defend his States against those which this cause might employ against him; his said Most Christian Majesty, desirous of omitting nothing that may be necessary to succour the said Elector in so pressing a danger, and to put him without delay in a position to take vigorous action, promises to furnish him with all necessary means to that end, and to send immediately to his help all the auxiliary troops that he may require to secure his country against all attacks, and in any case, by an effective diversion, to place him in a condition to have nothing to fear from his enemies, and to defend the justice of his claims.

"His Most Christian Majesty engages, in the most solemn manner, for himself, and for his successors and heirs in perpetuity, to guarantee, with all his power, against all whomsoever, to his Majesty the King of Prussia, his successors and heirs in perpetuity the tranquil possession of the whole of Lower Silesia, including the town of Breslau, it being clearly understood, however, on his part, that no change shall be made therein to the prejudice of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion, and in acknowledgment of the said guarantee, as well as for the complete settlement of the affair of the succession of Berg and Jülichs, and for the consolidation of the general tranquillity which might have been disturbed thereby, his Majesty the King of Prussia, for himself, his successors and heirs, engages himself in the strongest and most formal manner to cede to the Palatine House of Sulzbach and its heirs in perpetuity, the whole of his rights of succession to the

duchy of Jülichs and Berg. It is to be clearly understood that this cession is not to take place until full possession of the whole of Lower Silesia, including the town of Breslau, shall be assured to his Majesty the King of Prussia and to his heirs in perpetuity, by a free cession from the House of Austria, to be stipulated in the future treaty of peace under guarantee of his Most Christian Majesty, of the Palatine House and such other powers as it may be thought advisable to invite to concur in this guarantee, such as Spain, Sweden, and Bavaria, against all claims made or hereinafter to be made, on the part of whomsoever, on Lower Silesia, including the town of Breslau. It is also to be understood that his Prussian Majesty shall on his side guarantee jointly with his Most Christian Majesty and the powers who may intervene in the present treaty, to the said Palatine House of Sulzbach and to its descendants likewise in perpetuity, the possession of the States of Berg and Jülichs, against all pretensions made or hereinafter to be made, on the part of whomsoever, to the succession of the said States of Berg and Jülichs.

"As Russia has joined several other powers in engagements and concerts in favour of the Court of Vienna, in order to act against his Majesty the King of Prussia, either by making a diversion in his States, or by sending bodies of troops to the assistance of the Queen of Hungary, his Majesty the King of Prussia engages to contract from the present time an alliance with Sweden which shall assure that country that he will not oppose the views of Sweden respecting the recovery of those provinces

formerly taken by Russia, and actually in the possession of that power, and that he will, in no case, interfere with Sweden, whatsoever requisition may be made upon him by Russia, in virtue of the renewal of alliance of Dec. 27, 1740. The contracting parties engage to maintain most inviolable secrecy upon this separate article.

"Their Majesties are employing their best offices and care to unite the suffrages of the Electoral College in favour of the Elector of Bavaria, and it is with this intention that the King of Prussia promises that, when the election of the King of the Romans is brought forward at the approaching Diet of Electors, he will give his vote as Elector of Brandenburg to the said Elector of Bavaria, and engages, in any event, not to give it to any other, except in concert with his Most Christian Majesty."

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TRANSLATORS' NOTE.

Vol. I., p. 109.—*Le Mont pagnote.* This is an idiomatic expression which Littré defines as follows: "Mont pagnote—lieu élevé d'où l'on peut sans péril regarder un combat." Fleming and Tibbins translate it as "a place out of harm's way."

END OF VOL. I.

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